The Caribbean Jazz Project: Music Beyond Borders

By
Jesse Brumage Willis, BM, MM

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Approved

Lisa Rogers
Chairperson of the Committee

Alan Shinn

Kevin Wass

Accepted

Mark Sheridan
Dean of the Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of fifteen years and nine albums, the Caribbean Jazz Project (CJP) united the musical traditions of Latin America and the Caribbean with jazz. It is the aim of this research project to highlight the unique and progressive nature of the CJP. Through an examination of the band's varied personnel and playing style, this study exhibits how the music of the CJP is representative of both the diversity and unity that exists within Latin jazz. This document provides the reader a brief historical outline of bandleader Dave Samuels' musical career leading to the creation of the CJP. It also examines the revolving personnel of the CJP through three distinctive creative periods and discusses how these changes led to shifts in stylistic focus that became part of the band's inimitable identity. Furthermore, this study showcases how the CJP's music can be used as a mechanism for drumset players and percussionists to better understand the rhythmic roots of Latin jazz, which stem from the African influenced musical traditions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

Prominent early jazz musicians like Jelly Roll Morton and Duke Ellington have suggested that the syncopated rhythm of early jazz was influenced by the music of Latin America. Morton went so far as to say, "If you can't manage to put tinges of 'Spanish' in your tunes, you will never have the right seasoning, as I call it, for jazz."[1] While there has always been a strong relationship between jazz and Latin American rhythms, it was not until the mid 1940s, with the innovative work of musicians like Mario Bauza and Dizzie Gillespie, that the stylistic label "Latin jazz" was deemed necessary to differentiate Latin-influenced jazz from other jazz styles.[2]

Since it was first used, the term "Latin jazz" has been problematic. The extremely broad nature of the phrase is, at times, confusing and overwhelming to performers and listeners alike. Over the years, labels like "cubop," Afro-Cuban jazz and Afro-Brazilian jazz have been used to try and more accurately define the style of a particular song or artist. Furthermore, the term "Latin jazz" is often scrutinized as an oversimplification or marginalization of the many distinctive musical cultures that are typically included under its wide umbrella. Despite differing opinions about the labeling of this music, most will agree that it is the genre's breadth and eclectic spirit that brings Latin jazz its originality, sophistication and beauty.

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[1] Alan Lomax, *Jelly Roll Morton, The Complete Library of Congress Recording* (original recordings remastered), Rounder Records, Audio CD, 2005.

[2] Christopher, Washburne, "Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz," *Current Musicology,* no. 71-73 (2001-2): 409-426.

As much as any other band in the history of the genre, the Caribbean Jazz Project (CJP) embodied the broad definition of Latin jazz. In 1993, when Dave Samuels, Paquito D'Rivera and Andy Narell first put the group together, they set out to do something different. Rather than fit neatly into one sub-genre or another, they wanted to explore the boundaries of Latin jazz through the use of diverse rhythmic styles, creative forms and unique instrumentation. Dave Samuels, the founder and leader of the band through all of its different incarnations says, "We were interested in new music and a different way of playing, rather than boxing ourselves into the same sound that had gone on for a while."[3] With great ingenuity and expertise, the CJP combined jazz with musical styles from all over the Caribbean and Latin America. Furthermore, the band demonstrated that for all of the important differences that exist between these styles, African rhythmic roots unite them all.

The CJP's original and creative style led the group to four Grammy nominations for "Best Latin Jazz Recording" between 2002 and 2008. The group won the 2002 Grammy award for "Best Latin Jazz Recording" for the album *The Gathering* and also won the 2008 Latin Grammy award for "Best Latin Jazz Album" for *Afro-Bop Alliance*. Although the personnel of the CJP was a "constant carousel," with Dave Samuels as the cornerstone and catalyst, the band broke new ground and contributed to the ever-expanding definition of Latin jazz.

It is the aim of this research project to highlight the unique and progressive nature of the CJP. Through an examination of the band's varied personnel and

[3] Dave Samuels, interview by author, January 19, 2015.

playing style, this study shows how the music of the CJP is representative of both the diversity and unity that exists within Latin jazz. Through several personnel changes, the CJP achieved extraordinary diversity yet maintained the band's original identity, which was to seamlessly meld the musical traditions of Latin America and the Caribbean with jazz. Furthermore, this study showcases how the CJP's music can be used as a mechanism for drumset players and percussionists to better understand the complex rhythmic roots of Latin jazz, which stem from the Afro-centric musical traditions of Latin America and the Caribbean. Within this document, the phrase "Afro-centric music" is used to classify the many musical styles influenced by, or derived from African musical traditions. It is the author's hope that through this document the reader will not only gain working knowledge of traditional Latin and Caribbean rhythms, but also develop an understanding of the inherent similarities of all Afro-centric music of the Americas, which can be used to integrate tradition into hybrid musical styles such as Latin jazz.

Chapter one includes a brief overview and outline, which introduces the subject matter of this research project. Also included in chapter one is the justification for the study, the limitations of the study, and a review of related literature.

Chapter two offers a brief historical outline of Dave Samuels' musical career. It includes a discussion of the musical influences, professional opportunities and personal creative desires that led Samuels to become the catalyst for the formation of the CJP.

Chapter three of this study focuses on the genesis of the CJP, which was co-founded by Samuels, steel pan expert Andy Narell and clarinet virtuoso Paquito D'Rivera. This chapter showcases how the diverse personnel, unique instrumentation and collaborative working environment of the original CJP resulted in a musical aesthetic and stylistic approach that was unique within the Latin jazz genre.

Chapter four includes an examination of how, after the departure of Andy Narell and Paquito D'Rivera, Dave Samuels reinvented the CJP with new co-leaders, flautist Dave Valentin and guitarist Steve Kahn. With this change in leadership came a drastic change in the overall personnel, instrumentation and stylistic focus of the CJP. In addition to underscoring the contributions of the different musicians involved with each recording, this discussion considers how the band's unique musical aesthetic transformed along with the changes in the band's personnel.

Chapter five details the final creative period of the CJP, during which Dave Samuels was the band's sole musical leader. This chapter highlights the contributions of the various musicians who played on the four albums released during this time. Moreover, it emphasizes the dichotomy between Samuels and the revolving personnel around him and shows how this became part of the band's inimitable identity.

Chapter six gives a brief examination of the diverse nature of the Latin jazz genre as it relates to the generic, vague and potentially problematic use of the word "Latin" when describing musical style. Additionally, this chapter examines how knowledge of the inherent rhythmic frameworks around which Afro-centric music is

organized is critical to understanding Latin American and Caribbean music. The final section of this chapter exhibits how the drumset players and percussionists of the CJP used this knowledge to develop a unique stylistic approach within Latin jazz, which demonstrated profound knowledge of tradition and emphasized the innate similarities within all Afro-centric music of the Americas.

The final chapter provides insight on the impact of this study for further research into the playing style and historical significance of the CJP. It is the author's hope that the ideas introduced in this document will lead to more recognition of the CJP's unique character and approach to Latin jazz.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

There has been very little written on the formation and evolution of the CJP. It is the goal of this study to help fill this void in the literature and highlight the distinctiveness of the CJP within the Latin jazz community. Furthermore, this document will demonstrate how the music of the CJP can be used to bring clarity to the broad and ambiguous nature of drumset and percussion performance within Latin jazz.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The author feels that this endeavor will be a valuable resource for further study on the CJP, however, due to the size and scope of this project, there are several limitations. For example, the historical documentation of the band's personnel is

limited to only the musicians who performed on the nine CJP albums released through the Heads Up International and Concord record labels. The touring personnel of the CJP are not discussed in this paper. When playing in a genre such as Latin jazz, the rhythm section is responsible for providing an appropriate and cohesive stylistic foundation. While a study of the CJP's music would be beneficial for all rhythm section players wanting to better understand Latin jazz, the stylistic examination of the CJP's music in chapter six is limited to a drumset and percussion focus. Furthermore, the size constraints of this document will not allow for a stylistic analysis of the entire CJP catalogue. Instead, the focus will be on a few specific musical examples that best characterize the players' deep knowledge of Latin and Caribbean rhythms and unique stylistic approach to Latin jazz.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There has been very little written about the CJP but several sources were helpful in gathering contextual knowledge about the topics of this document. Books and articles such as *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880's to Today,* by John Storm Roberts, and "Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz," by Christopher Washburne from *Current Musicology* provided valuable historical knowledge of the Latin jazz genre. Dr. Washburne's article was notably valuable in bringing more definition to the very ambiguous term, Latin jazz.

There were several sources that were helpful in my research on the commonalities of Latin American and Caribbean musical styles. Three books that were of particular significance were *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz,* by Raul

A. Fernandez, *The Latin Beat: The Rhythm and Roots of Latin Music from Bossa Nova to Salsa and Beyond,* by Ed Morales and *Cuba and It's Music,* by Ned Sublette. Each of these sources was useful in discovering cultural relationships and musical connections between various styles of Latin and Caribbean music.

Furthermore, the author's discussion of Afro-centric rhythmic structure was informed by books and articles such as *The Conga Drummer's Guidebook* by Michael Spiro, "Tresillo: A Rhythmic Framework Connecting Differing Rhythmic Styles" by Andrew Acquista, "The 3:2 Relationship as the Foundation of Timelines in West African Musics" by Eugene Novotney and "Black Music in the Circum-Caribbean" by Samuel A. Floyd Jr. All of these articles helped the author identify and better understand the rhythmic similarities within Afro-centric music of the Americas.

CHAPTER 2

DAVE SAMUELS: EXPERIMENTATION AND INNOVATION

The CJP was the musical concept of vibraphonist Dave Samuels. He created the band in 1993 as an outlet for exploring West African, European and Caribbean musical influences within the context of jazz harmony and improvisation. Although this was not the first time Samuels had experimented with Latin jazz, it was by far his deepest and most dedicated venture into the genre. The year 1993 marked the beginning of a fifteen-year journey for Samuels as the band leader of the CJP. This was a career altering experience for Samuels, who led the band to four Grammy nominations and two wins for "Best Latin Jazz Album." This chapter showcases Samuels' diverse musical background and examines specific musical experiences that led to the creation of the CJP.

Dave Samuels was born in Waukegan, Illinois, in 1948. His parents encouraged musical participation at a young age, enrolling him and his two older brothers into music lessons when they were children.[4] When Samuels was six, he began learning the fundamentals of playing drums and percussion from Jake Jerger, who was a prominent drummer, percussionist and music educator in the Chicago area.[5] As a teenager he studied piano with Alan Swain, former DePaul University

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[4] Dave Samuels, interview by Marian McPartland, August 21, 2009, Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz, National Public Radio.

[5] "Dave Samuels: Achieving One Unified Voice," *JazzEd Magazine,* January 22, 2009, http://www.jazzedmagazine.com/2516/articles/spotlight/dave-samuels-achieving-one-unified-voice/ (accessed February 25, 2016).

professor of jazz and a fixture in piano and jazz education in the Chicago area for over 50 years. "He [Alan] opened my eyes to the world of harmony," Samuels says, "Each week I would take a standard tune and try to re-harmonize it."[6]

It was the love of both piano and drums that led Samuels to find his true passion in the vibraphone. As a young vibraphone player Samuels was largely self-taught; however, he credits Renick Ross for his first performing opportunities on the instrument. Ross was a prominent a piano player and bandleader in the Chicago area. Speaking of his experience with Ross, Samuels said, "I learned how to play vibes in Renick's band and I credit him with giving me the opportunity to learn how to play vibes in a band, not out of a book and playing in a practice room."[7] After graduating from high school, Samuels attended Boston University but not for music as one might expect. At the time, there were no music programs that offered exclusive study on the vibraphone, instead Samuels studied psychology and took music classes as electives.[8]

Throughout college Samuels remained an active vibraphonist in the Boston area. Many of the musicians he played with at the time were either students or teachers at the Berklee College of Music. In 1972, after receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree from Boston University, Samuels was given the opportunity to join the faculty at Berklee as a vibraphone instructor.[9] It was through Berklee colleague and

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Dave Samuels, interview by Marian McPartland.
[9] Ibid.

renowned jazz drummer Alan Dawson that Samuels received his first high-profile gig with saxophonist Gerry Mulligan. Samuels recalls how he landed the gig:

> In 1974 I was just moving from Boston to New York when Alan Dawson referred me to [baritone saxophonist] Gerry Mulligan. Dawson had worked with Mulligan and recommended me, when Gerry told him he needed a percussionist. Gerry wanted someone to play more percussion than vibes, but after I started working with him, I played less and less percussion and more vibes. I worked with him for four or five years. It was great to play next to Gerry each night. He was part of jazz history.[10]

Samuels worked with Mulligan from 1974 through 1979.

The exposure Samuels received from touring with Mulligan helped him land other performing opportunities. He quickly made a name for himself as a top call vibraphonist in New York City and as one of the premier mallet percussionists in the United States. In 1976, he was asked to join the avant-garde fusion band, Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention*,* for five nights at the well-known Palladium concert hall in New York City. The recordings from the Palladium would eventually be released as the seminal live Zappa record, *Zappa in New York*. After the gig, Dave was asked to join the Mothers full time, but he turned it down because he was involved in several of his own projects including Double Image, a vibraphone and marimba duo with David Friedman.[11]

Much like Frank Zappa, Samuels was a very imaginative musician, who was interested in creating his own musical experiences. His versatility as a performer

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[10] Mark Small, *Remaining in the Fold* (Berklee.edu, https://www.berklee.edu/bt/152/bb_faculty_profile.html (Accessed February 25, 2016).

[11] Achieving One Unified Voice," *JazzEd Magazine,* 22, January 2009.

allowed him to thrive in a variety of musical settings including jazz, pop, classical, and Latin music. Samuels was always interested in finding new musical contexts for mallet percussion instruments. Throughout his career, he played in mixed-instrumental ensembles with unique instrumentations. As a result of his versatility as a performer and desire to experiment, Samuels significantly broadened the audience of both the vibraphone and the marimba.

In 1973, Samuels' experimental nature led him to co-found Double Image, a mallet percussion duo with fellow vibraphonist David Friedman. The group was revolutionary, not because of album sales or widespread commercial popularity, but because it was the first duo to combine the vibraphone and marimba.[12] Their compositional approach crossed the stylistic boundaries of jazz, classical and popular music. Furthermore, they exposed a new audience to mallet percussion and forever changed the course of percussion chamber music. In 2015, over 40 years after Samuels' and Friedman's initial collaboration, Double Image was voted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame.

It was in Double Image that Samuels first began to incorporate the marimba into his professional playing.[13] David Friedman recalls the first rehearsals of Double Image:

> We met in early 1973. At the time, David was teaching at Berklee and I was living in New York. We got together and just started experimenting with the duo idea, using two vibraphones at first. We

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[12] Lauren Vogel Weiss, "Double Image: Two Musicians + Eight Mallets = 32 Years," *Percussive Notes* 44, no. 5 (October 2006): 44.

[13] Rick Mattingly, "Mallets, Amplification and MIDI," *Percussive Notes* 35, no. 3 (June 1997): 66.

> both decided that what was needed was a contrasting timbre, so we replaced one of the vibes with a 4 1/3-octave marimba and were immediately knocked out by the result. The contrast was there in every respect, a lot of bottom to the sound plus the wonderful earthiness of wood! I wrote directly after that a piece called "Nyack," tailored to this combination and the next time we got together we started rehearsing it. It became one of our 'standards.' We played duo for quite some time before expanding by adding percussion.[14]

In 1977, Dave Samuels began a relationship with Jay Beckenstein, the bandleader of a Buffalo based jazz fusion group Spyro Gyra. Samuels first met Beckenstein on a gig in Buffalo in 1977; after hearing Samuels play, Beckenstein thought that the sound of Samuels' marimba would add a "tropical" effect to his tune "Shaker Song."[15] The song would be included on Spyro Gyra's self-titled, first album, which was released in 1978. Samuels would go on to play vibes, marimba and steel drums on the band's next album, *Morning Dance*, which received national airplay and heightened the group's reputation. For the next three years Samuels continued to do studio work with the band. In 1983, Samuels joined the band full time; he would continue to record and tour with the group until 1994.[16]

Spyro Gyra's mixture of jazz, funk, R&B and world music styles was hard to categorize. This quality appealed to Samuels' eclectic musical imagination and desire to experiment. Samuels says, "I heard what they [Spyro Gyra] were doing,

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[14] Roger B. Schupp, "Reunion: An Interview with David Samuels and David Friedman," *Percussive Notes* 32, no. 2 (April 1994): 37-41.

[15] Spyro Gyra, Band History, 2015, http://spyrogyra.com/about (accessed March 27, 2016).

[16] Ibid.

and realized that my sound and personality would be comfortable in that setting."[17] Samuels' experience with Spyro Gyra was an important turning point in his career. Not only did the band bring him mainstream exposure as a vibraphonist and marimbist, it also broadened his horizons as performer. "It [Spyro Gyra] has given me the opportunity to explore a whole other side of my playing," Samuels said in an interview for the Los Angeles Times in 1988, "it's a very different musical environment from what I was experiencing before I joined the band."[18]

After touring with the band for five years, Samuels was ready to expand his career beyond Spyro Gyra. In 1988, he released his first solo album, *Living Colors*. Although Spyro Gyra bandleader Jay Beckenstein produced the record, Samuels wanted the project to be a departure from the band. "I was very conscious of not wanting to have anyone from Spyro on the recording," Samuels said, "not because I don't enjoy working with those players, but because I wanted to use musicians who brought to the session musical histories completely different from the guys in Spyro Gyra."[19] One of those musicians was steel pan virtuoso Andy Narell, who brought the musical traditions of Trinidad and Tobago and the French Caribbean to Samuels' music. In addition to his stylistic knowledge and the sound of his steel pan, Narell contributed two of his own compositions, "Pan Dance" and "New Math," to *Living*

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Don Heckman, "Samuels Follows a Different Beat Outside of Spyro Gyra," *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 1988.

[19] Ibid.

Colors. Five years later, Narell would join Samuels and clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera to co-lead the original incarnation of the CJP.

The solo records of Dave Samuels released between 1988 and 1993 can be listened to as a creative bridge between Samuels work with Spyro Gyra, which continued through 1994, and the first studio release of the CJP in 1995. Dave's compositional style and explorations into the fusion of jazz with Latin rhythms during this period both reflect his experience with Spyro Gyra and presage his work with the CJP. Several of Samuels' Latin oriented compositions such as "Rendezvous," "Ivory Coast," "Jamboree," and "One Step Ahead," which first appeared on his solo albums would later be rearranged for the CJP and become part the group's standard repertoire. Furthermore, several musicians who appeared on Samuels' solo recordings would later return as integral contributors to the CJP.

In 1989, Samuels recorded his second solo album, *Ten Degrees North*. The album included an impressive line up of musicians including renowned bass player John Patitucci, who had played with Chick Corea, and Peruvian drummer Alex Acuña from the band Weather Report. The album also featured guitarist Steve Kahn, who would later co-lead the CJP on two albums, *New Horizons* (2000) and *Paraiso* (2001). *Ten Degrees North* included several Latin-leaning fusion compositions written by Samuels of which two, "Rendezvous" and "Ivory Coast," were later recorded by the CJP.

Samuels' third solo album, *Natural Selection*, was released in 1991. For this project, Samuels collaborated with drummer Will Kennedy, bassist Jimmy Haslip and keyboardist Russell Ferrante from the prominent funk-fusion band, *The*

Yellowjackets. Although the majority of the music on the album falls into the post-bop and funk genres, Samuels interest in Latin music is heard on his composition "Cara Linda," which uses a quasi-*calypso* groove. For three tracks, including "Cara Linda," Samuels hired former Spyro Gyra percussionist Marc Quinoñes, who added his talents on *timbales*, congas and bongo.

In 1992, Samuels recorded *Del Sol*, his most Latin and Caribbean-oriented jazz album to date. The album was indicative of his growing interest in Latin music and a foreshadowing of things to come with the CJP. The album included two Samuels compositions, "Jamboree" and "One Step Ahead," which would later appear on the CJP's 2001 release, *Paraiso*. To enhance the Latin-feel of *Del Sol*, Samuels would ask several highly experienced musicians to join him for the album. Steel pan player Andy Narell once again contributed as both a performer and composer. The album also featured acclaimed Panamanian pianist Danilo Perez, who had performed with Latin jazz greats such as Paquito D'Rivera and the Dizzie Gillespie United Nations Orchestra. Also appearing on the record was renowned Latin jazz flautist Dave Valentin. The relationship between Samuels and Valentin would prove to be fruitful beyond this album. Eight years later, when reassembling the CJP after Andy Narell and Paquito D'Rivera left, Samuels would ask Valentin to headline the CJP alongside himself and guitarist Steve Kahn. After *Del Sol*, it was clear that the eclectic Samuels had a significant interest in performing Latin jazz. In 1993, while he still recording and touring with Spyro Gyra, he started a new Latin-jazz project that would change the trajectory of his career.

CHAPTER 3

THE ORIGINAL CARIBBEAN JAZZ PROJECT

Andy Narell was introduced to steel pans, also known as steel drums, in 1961 when his father, Murray, brought several pans back to New York after a trip to Trinidad.[20] In his own right, Murray Narell was a pivotal figure in the development of steel pan in the United States. As a social worker on Manhatten's lower east side, Murray started one of the first steel band programs in the country.[21] After graduating high school at the age of fifteen, Andy Narell enrolled at the University of California, Berkley as a premed major.[22] While in school he played in the Cal-Berkley Jazz Band. Through this and other musical experiences in college, he realized his true calling was music.[23] After switching his major and graduating with a degree in music composition, Narell dedicated his life to performing and promoting the steel band tradition.

Since the 1970s, Narell has developed a reputation as one of the world's foremost steel pan players. He is also largely considered the most influential American steel pan player in history. His efforts to expand the awareness of the

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[20] Michael Goodwin, "Andy Narell: Caribbean Man," *Caribbean Beat Magazine*, no.37, May/June, 1999. http://caribbean-beat.com/issue-37/andy-narrell-caribbean-man#axzz448e1R48B (accessed March 26, 2016).

[21] Smith, Angela. *Steel Drums and Steelbands: A History* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 135.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

steel pan tradition within the United States have helped the instrument rise from novelty status to consideration as a legitimate musical instrument. His incredible versatility as a performer, particularly in the jazz idiom, has brought exposure to the steel pan's ability to thrive in almost any musical context. In 1979, with the release of his first solo album, *Hidden Treasure,* he brought together the distant musical cousins of jazz and *calypso*. Through the next decade, he recorded and produced several more albums that would unite jazz with the musical traditions of Trinidad and Tobago and the French Caribbean.

Andy Narell and Dave Samuels were musical contemporaries with much in common. Through the 1980s, both men were developing careers in jazz playing what most people would consider to be instruments that were uncommon to the style. Narell was a pioneer, who, through jazz, was taking the steel pan to places it had never been before. Before Samuels, only a few vibraphonists like Emil Richards and Bobby Hutcherson had experimented with incorporating the marimba into jazz. By making the instrument a large part of his musical focus, Samuels elevated the stature of the instrument within the genre. Both Samuels and Narell developed a deep interest in Latin music and music of the Caribbean. For Narell, this was expected because his primary instrument, the steel pan, was of Caribbean origin. For Samuels, it was a love that developed as a result of several musical influences like vibraphonist Cal Tjader and the many Latin percussionists he collaborated with during his career. With so many similarities, it was only natural that these two innovative musicians would eventually collaborate. Between 1988 and 1993, Narell played on two of Samuels' solo albums, *Living Color* and *Del Sol*. It is interesting to

note that their collaboration on *Del Sol* foreshadowed their later work with fellow musical trailblazer Paquito D'Rivera as the CJP.

Although Samuels had never performed with Paquito D'Rivera, he had met D'Rivera in airports while traveling to and from various music festivals.[24] Samuels was very aware of D'Rivera's musically diverse skill set and thought he would a perfect fit for the project. Considered by many to be a child prodigy, D'Rivera's musical career began at a very young age in his home of Havana, Cuba. By the age of 10, he had performed with the Cuban National Theater Orchestra and at 17, he was a featured soloist with the Cuban National Symphony on both clarinet and saxophone.[25] In 1967, while continuing his career with the symphony, he became a founding member and director of the Orquesta Cubana de Musica Moderna, a musical ensemble sponsored by the Cuban government to play American music. Out of the Orquesta Cubana de Musica Moderna came the highly influential Afro-Cuban fusion group Irakere. D'Rivera founded Irakere in 1973 with fellow Orquesta members Chucho Valdes and Arturo Sandoval. D'Rivera would play with Irakere until 1980 when he defected to the United States to pursue a career as a jazz musician.[26]

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[24] Dave Samuels, interview by Marian McPartland.

[25] Paquito D'Rivera Biography. http://www.paquitodrivera.com/bio (accessed April 16, 2016).

[26] Chip Boaz, "Latin Jazz Conversations: Paquito D'Rivera." The Latin Jazz Corner Blog, January 12, 2011, http://www.chipboaz.com/blog/2011/01/12/latin-jazz-conversations-paquito-drivera-part-3/ (accessed on April 3, 2016).

Shortly after arriving in the United States, D'Rivera would develop a reputation in the United States as a clarinet and saxophone virtuoso who was as comfortable in the symphony hall as he was in the jazz club. Throughout the 1980s D'Rivera released several albums, many of which topped the billboard jazz chart. In 1988, he was asked to join trumpeter Dizzie Gillespie and the United Nations Jazz Orchestra, a group assembled by Gillespie to showcase the multi-national heritage of jazz.[27] Although he was busy with many other projects, when he received the call from Dave Samuels and Andy Narell his interest was piqued and he accepted the gig.

In the summer of 1993 well-known New York City concert promoter Julie Lokin approached Dave Samuels about putting together a band for a concert at the Central Park Zoo in Manhattan, New York.[28] Having recently collaborated with Andy Narell on his solo records, Samuels asked Narell to join him for this new venture. He next approached Paquito D'Rivera to see if he was interested in the project. After Narell and D'Rivera agreed to do the concert, the trio assembled a rhythm section and began the first rehearsals with the CJP.

When the group first came together, the structure and direction of the group was very open. The only condition was that Samuels, Narell and D'Rivera would each bring tunes from their own catalogues to the group. Samuels recalls the first rehearsals with the group:

> We started with each one of us bringing in one of our own tunes and the rhythm section was there making additions or subtracting things. We worked a few years doing it like that. It was a real opportunity for

[27] Ibid.

[28] Dave Samuels, interview by Marian McPartland.

> me; I learned a tremendous amount playing with all those musicians. It was a new sound and everyone was contributing. The format was to keep it alive and give everybody an opportunity to express themselves, not only as a player but also as a writer. It was a community thing, which was great and I think we made an impact.[29]

Samuels, Narell and D'Rivera could immediately feel that this band would be different. Even before playing a note, they knew this endeavor would provide new musical opportunities for each of them. In Samuels' words, "This was an opportunity to play with a different instrumentation."[30] The combination of vibraphone, marimba, steel pan and saxophone was not only new to the band but also a first in Latin jazz. Samuels continues to say, "Paquito, Andy or I, none of us had actually put that particular kind of instrumentation together before. The music was deep. It not only had a different texture to it; but, the combination of all these instruments really made it sound like it was from a different planet."[31]

D'Rivera explains how the CJP was a learning experience for everyone in the band:

> Our main interest was to learn from each other, learn from the other guy what he may know better than you. For instance, I know the Cuban thing and have worked with lots of Brazilian musicians, but I learned the Caribbean style from Andy, and picked up a lot of grooves from bassist Oscar Stagnaro. And what can I say about Dave? He's so versatile with the mallets, he has so much finesse, and with a swinging motion.[32]

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[29] Dave Samuels, interview by author, 2015.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] "The Caribbean Jazz Project," Artist Gallery, Smooth and Soul Website, http://www.smooth-jazz.de/Artists1/TheCaribbeanJazzProject.html (accessed April 16, 2016).

After the Central Park concert, the trio sought out other opportunities to play together. Samuels said, “At the time we were just trying to find music that we liked to play together and find gigs where we could work together.” Although they all remained busy with their own projects, Samuels, Narell and D’Rivera felt strongly about keeping this unique venture alive and wanted to explore the possibilities of making a record and going on tour. After contacting the International Music Network, a marketing company specializing in the promotion of progressive musical idioms from around the world, the CJP signed with the Heads Up International Ltd. Record label. Shortly thereafter, the band went to the Carriage House Studio in Samford, Connecticut to record their first self-titled album, *The Caribbean Jazz Project,* released in 1995*.*

The rhythm section for the first album was comprised of musicians whose skill-sets were as diverse as their countries of origin. Although they were all from different musical backgrounds, each musician was highly skilled and many of them had already played together in The Paquito D’Rivera Quintet. Joining the CJP from D’Rivera’s group was Oscar Stagnaro on bass, Dario Eskanazi on piano and Mark Walker on drums. For this album, the band would add well-known studio percussionist Luis Conte as a guest artist on congas and percussion. Samuels comments on the band’s unique dynamic of the first CJP:

> I had worked with Oscar [Stagnaro], Mark Walker and Dario [Eskanazi]; I met them through Paquito. The material they liked playing already had a real texture to it and when we added the other players, Andy, Luis and myself, it took on a new life.[33]

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[33] Dave Samuels, interview by author, 2015.

Peruvian born Oscar Stagnaro was classically trained at the Conservatory of Music in Lima, Peru. He was a first call bass player in Peru before moving to the United States in 1979 to study jazz.[34] Growing up in Peru, Stagnaro developed an extensive knowledge of Brazilian and other South American styles. In 1992, he joined the Paquito D'Rivera Quintet. This was the beginning of a musical relationship between Stagnaro and D'rivera that would continue for over two decades and lead to many more opportunities for Stagnaro, including performing with the CJP. In total, Stagnaro would play on four of the nine CJP records.

Dario Eskanazi, the piano player for the first CJP album, was from Argentina and brought a slightly different South American flavor to the band. Like Stagnaro, he was a member of D'Rivera's band and had an extensive background in Latin music, and in particular South American styles. At the age of 23, Eskanazi moved to the United States to study film scoring at Berklee College of Music. After graduating, he established himself in New York as one of the city's leading Latin jazz piano players.[35] Beyond the world of Latin jazz, Eskanazi has built a successful career as a composer for films and video games. Eskanazi has had a lasting impact on the sound of the CJP, playing on a total of five CJP albums.

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[34] Oscar Stagnaro, Biography, http://www.oscarstagnarobass.com/about-oscar/ (accessed April 16, 2016).

[35] Dario Eskanazi Website, Biography, http://www.darioeskenazi.com/Bio.html (accessed April 14, 2016).

The drummer for the original incarnation of the CJP was Mark Walker. Like Samuels, Walker was from the Chicago area. Over the course of his career, he developed a reputation as one of the most versatile drummers in the music business. While he has recorded and toured with renowned artists such as Michel Camilo, Eliane Elias and Lyle Mays, Walker is most recognized for his long standing relationships with Paquito D'Rivera and the versatile jazz group Oregon.[36] Walker explains how he first met Dave Samuels and became involved with the CJP:

> I played with Paquito [D'Rivera] and his band from 1989-1992, then in 1992 I started playing with the Lyle Mays Quartet. I played with that band from 92-94. While I was touring with Lyle, Dave Samuels heard me play, when we were in Connecticut. At that time, I was getting ready to move to New York and he wanted to use me on some projects. In the summer of 94, I started working with Paquito again, he knew I was moving to New York and he began calling for some other gigs as well. Shortly after that we got together and started playing with what was basically the Caribbean Jazz Project, Dave, Paquito, Andy Narell on steel pan, Oscar Stagnaro on bass and Dario Eskanazi on piano. On the live gigs there were no percussionists except Andy who occasionally played some additional percussion. So it was a lot different on the record than it was live because we didn't have percussion.[37]

Although the CJP did not use a percussionist on the first live performances, percussion was fundamental to the sound and stylistic authenticity of the CJP. For the first album, the band hired master studio percussionist Luis Conte to contribute as a guest artist. Conte, a native of Cuba, built a career as a Los Angeles studio

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[36] Mark Walker Profile," Mark Walker Website, http://markwalkerdrums.com/Website2015/?page_id=5 (accessed April 14, 2016).

[37] Mark Walker, interview by author, tape recording, Myrtle Beach, February 29, 2016.

musician throughout the 1970s and 1980s by masterfully integrating his Cuban musical roots into the work of artists such as Madonna, James Taylor and Phil Collins as well as numerous other artists in pop, jazz and Latin music. Conte, who sounds more than comfortable in the CJP environment, had previously recorded with Andy Narell on several of his solo albums. This would be the only time Conte would record with the CJP.

The CJP was a collective in the sense that it wasn't meant to feature any one individual, nor was it the intention of the band to focus on one specific style of music; instead, it was a playground of musical ideas from the Caribbean and South America. Samuels recalls what it was like to work in this environment. Samuels says:

> We made sure as best we could that it wasn't about any one individual, instead it was about the different cultures, the feel and the tempo; then you overlay all the different sounds of the instruments and you come up with a sound that no one had heard before. It was such a comfortable environment to play in.[38]

Diversity was what set the CJP apart. The self-titled first album embodied the broad definition of Latin jazz. On this album alone, the band creatively united jazz with over a dozen styles of Latin and Caribbean music. In my interview with CJP drummer Mark Walker, he comments on the group's versatility:

> It was definitely one of the first groups to play a lot of different rhythms in a jazz context, authentically. The only other group at the time that was doing something similar was Paquito's group but because we had Andy, that added another dimension that no one else had. The Caribbean element from Trinidad and the French Caribbean

[38] Dave Samuels, interview by author, 2015.

> Martinique, that was more present [with the CJP], and wasn't in Paquito's band's repertoire.[39]

Walker also elaborated about the arranging process of the CJP and how the group was able to maintain authenticity through so many changes in style. Walker recalls:

> Whoever wrote the tune had a pretty good idea of what it would be rhythmically but, especially in the case of Dave, he was open to suggestions. Dave was into the rhythms but wrote what could be considered more of a hybrid, which was good in a way, because it was left to our interpretation. Oscar, being from Peru, was very important in that band because he knew so many of the South American rhythms. He turned me on to a lot of rhythms in that band. Paquito once said that the Caribbean Jazz Project was like a little music school. Dario was from Argentina and knew a lot of the Brazilian rhythms really well and he also knew the Cuban stuff. It was nice to have that combination of people because we could definitely go full on Cuban no problem and then we could go to Brazil. We could do it all authentically.[40]

After the release of the first album, the CJP toured and continued to refine their sound, style and multi-national approach to Latin jazz. The configuration of the touring band was largely the same as it was on the record. Leading the band was Dave Samuels on vibes and marimba, Andy Narell on steel pans and Paquito D'Rivera on clarinet and saxophone. The touring rhythm section was also largely the same with Dario Eskanazi on piano, Oscar Stagnaro on bass and Mark Walker on drums. The biggest difference was that the CJP did not use a percussionist in the touring band. Although the sound was aesthetically different with out percussion, Walker's extensive knowledge of Latin percussion and creative drumset voicing helped him fill the sonic void and preserve the authenticity of the CJP sound. Walker

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Mark Walker, interview by author, 2016.

discusses how the absence of percussion changed his approach to playing with band:

> It was a challenge playing the live shows because we typically didn't have a percussionist due to budget. On gigs, I would try to figure out ways of playing each rhythm to make it sound like more than one player. Then when it came time to play with a percussionist again, I had to leave the space that needed to be left for the percussionist.[41]

After touring extensively following the release of their first album, the CJP would return to the studio in 1997 to record their second album, *Island Stories*. The frontline trio of Samuels, Narell and D'Rivera was still intact with Dario Eskanazi, Oscar Stagnaro and Mark Walker returning in the rhythm section. The new addition for this album was Pernell Saturnino, a highly skilled percussionist from the southern Caribbean island of Curacao. Saturnino was well versed in both popular and folkloric music styles from the Caribbean and South America. Popular music is music composed with the intention of achieving widespread popularity through mass distribution and consumption. This is in contrast to folkloric music, which is the traditional music of people of a specific country or region. Folkloric music typically serves a very specific societal function and is usually disseminated orally from generation to generation. Like fellow CJP member Dario Eskanazi, Saturnino moved to the United States to attend Berklee College of Music. After graduating from Berklee, he began performing and recording with Eskanazi in Paquito D'Rivera's big band. Both Eskanazi and Saturnino appeared on D'Rivera's 1996 album *Portraits of Cuba*, which won a Grammy award for "Best Latin Jazz

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[41] Ibid.

Performance." Having developed strong relationships with both Eskanazi and D'Rivera, Saturnino was an obvious choice when the CJP was in need of a percussionist for *Island Stories*. This was Saturnino's only full album with the CJP, although he would record three tracks with the band nine years later on the album *Mosaics*. While Saturnino did not play on as many albums as other CJP percussionists, his influence on the sound of the band was considerable. Due to Saturnino's wide breadth of experience with popular and folkloric rhythms from all over the Caribbean and South America, the *Island Stories* album is as stylistically diverse as any CJP album.

After *Island Stories*, D'Rivera and Narell decided to depart from the CJP to dedicate more time to their own projects. Samuels also took a break from the CJP but continued to work in the realm of Latin jazz. In 1998, he released *Tjader-ized*, his first solo album since starting the CJP. The album was a tribute to one of Samuels' mentors and the forefather of Latin jazz vibraphone, Cal Tjader. For this project, Samuels asked Latin jazz legends and former Tjader bandmates Ray Barretto and Eddie Palmieri to be guest performers on the recording. The core of Samuels' band was made up of some of the most prominent performers in Latin jazz; including, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez on drums, Karl Perazzo on percussion and David Sanchez on tenor saxophone. Flautist Dave Valentin and guitarist Steve Kahn, who had collaborated with Samuels on previous records, also joined the project. Kahn and Valentin played on *Ten Degrees North* and *Del Sol* respectively. The encounter with both Valentin and Kahn would prove to be timely because it was

while touring with the Tjader tribute band that Samuels asked them both to co-lead the second coming of the CJP.

CHAPTER 4

A NEW SOUND

Shortly after touring with the Cal Tjader tribute band, both Dave Samuels and Steve Kahn would appear on Dave Valentin's 1999 solo album, *Sunshower*, which was released on the Concord Picante record label. The trio's collaboration on Valentin's record was well received and would lead to Samuels signing the CJP with the Concord label in 1999. This was a fresh start for the CJP. The change in personnel and record label gave Samuels the opportunity to take the CJP in an entirely new direction. While the combination of vibraphone and flute and the combination of vibraphone and guitar had been explored in Latin jazz, the consortium of all three of these instruments was unique to this group.

Although the new CJP would be a departure from the previous version of the band in both instrumentation and musical texture, Samuels would carry over the core values of the original group. Samuels states:

> The idea of the Caribbean Jazz Project has always been to explore the wealth of music that has evolved from the melding of the influences found in the Caribbean, Africa and Europe. When we first formed, the sound was based around the combination of my vibraphone and marimba with saxophone and steel drums. We then reformed to create a totally new sonic landscape - keeping the mallet instruments, but adding flute and guitar as other lead instruments.[42]

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[42] "Caribbean Jazz Project Artist Page," Concord Music Group Website, 2016, http://www.concordmusicgroup.com/artists/caribbean-jazz-project/ (accessed April 5, 2016).

Valentin, who is of Puerto Rican descent, started his musical career as a drummer.[43] He brought with him an incredibly rhythmic style of playing that fit seamlessly into the concept of the CJP. He also brought a wealth of experience in Latin jazz, including having played with Latin jazz giants such as Machito, Dizzie Gillespie, and Tito Puente. The third member of the band-leading trio was Steve Kahn, who had made a name for himself through the late 1970s and early 1980s playing with artists such as Weather Report, Maynard Ferguson, Steely Dan and the Brecker Brothers.[44] A very successful band leader in his own right, Kahn recorded several albums with celebrated jazz musicians such as Steve Gadd, Dave Sanborn, Don Grolnick and Mike Manieri.[45]

With Samuels, Valentin and Kahn now leading the band, the CJP released *New Horizons* in 2000. In addition to the big changes in the frontline of the band, the rhythm section for the band was given a complete "makeover." The addition of flute and guitar gave the group an opportunity to rethink the instrumentation of the rhythm section. They decided to omit both piano and drumset, as was standard in most traditional Latin jazz bands. They ended up with a very unique instrumentation that included vibraphone, flute, guitar, bass and two percussionists.

The addition of flute and guitar, plus the omission of the drumset in favor of *timbales* and congas made the new CJP instrumentation reminiscent of Cal Tjader's

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[43] Dave Samuels, interview by author, 2015.

[44] Steve Kahn Website, Steve Kahn Biography, 2016, http://www.stevekhan.com/khanbio.htm (accessed March 16, 2016).

[45] Ibid.

early Latin jazz groups of the 1950's and 1960's. It was also similar in instrumentation to two Cuban popular music traditions from the early 20th century, the *Charanga Francesa* and the Cuban *Conjunto*. The *Charanga Francesa*, which included violin, bass and two percussionists, prominently featured the flute as the lead instrument. These groups played a style of music known as the *danzon*, which was the germ for the contemporary Cuban popular music style known as *timba*.[46] The Cuban *Conjunto*, which included vocals, guitar, bass, two percussionists and two to four trumpets was the forefather of the *salsa* tradition. The *son montuno* style, which was played by the Cuban *Conjuntos*, was built on the cyclical rhythmic pattern of the *tres cubano* guitar, known as the *guajira*.

The CJP fused elements of each of these early Cuban popular music traditions into their music. From the *danzon* style of the *charangas*, they borrowed flute melodies and the use of *timbales*. From the *son montuno* style of the *Conjuntos*, they incorporated the use of conga drums and guitar *guajiras*. One will notice all of these elements in Steve Kahn's composition "Charanga, Si, Si," which is a modern hybrid of the *danzon*, *son montuno* and jazz. The CJP's instrumentation on *New Horizons* was both unique to the genre and brought the group closer to the roots of Latin jazz. As a result of the Cuban style of instrumentation, the band's compositions on *New Horizons* exclusively explored Afro-Cuban musical styles. This deliberate stylistic

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[46] Michael Spiro and Mike Mixtacki, "The Evolution of Cuban Popular Percussion: From Danzon to timba," *Percussive Notes* 52, no. 2(March 2014), 4.

focus would continue through the band's next two albums, *Paraiso* and *The Gathering*.

Bass player John Benitez, who had also previously recorded with Samuels, Kahn and Valentin on Samuels' *Tjader-ized,* joined the CJP on electric bass. For the percussion chairs, Samuels hired Robert Vilera and Richie Flores, two extremely versatile percussionists who flourished in the absence of a drumset. Venezuelan born Robert Vilera would lend his talents on *timbales* and percussion. Vilera, a twenty-time Grammy winner has performed with giants of Latin music like Tito Puente, Cachao, Celia Cruz, Gloria Estefan, and Jennifer Lopez.[47] This would be Vilera's only appearance with the CJP.

Richie Flores, who was born in New York but raised in Puerto Rico, was a child conga prodigy. He is considered one of the premier conga players in the world and has performed and recorded with distinguished Latin music artists including Eddie Palmieri, Cachao, Tito Puente, David Sanchez and the Fania All-Stars. In addition to his work on *New Horizons*, Flores would continue to record with the CJP on the next two albums, *Paraiso* and Grammy-winning album, *The Gathering*.

Like the first CJP album, *New Horizons* was a chance for Samuels to experiment with new musicians and find another unique ensemble sound. Samuels, Kahn and Valentin must have liked this sound because one year later, in 2001, they

[47] "Robert Vilera Biography," Vilera Productions Website, Biography, 2015, http://www.vileraproductions.com/news.html (accessed April 15, 2016).

returned to the studio to record the fourth CJP album, *Paraiso*. The band also chose to keep the instrumentation of the rhythm section consistent with the previous album. Piano was once again absent and drumset only appears on the final track, which is a percussion heavy medley of Mongo Santamaria's "Obaricoso" and CJP percussionist Richie Flores' own composition "Ritmos, Colores, y Sentidos."

Paraiso used the same instrumentation as *New Horizons*, but the personnel in the rhythm section was quite different. Conga player Richie Flores was the only returning member of the rhythm section. Joining him were two talented *timbale* players, Luisito Quintero and Dafnis Prieto. Quintero, originally from Venezuela, grew up in a family of musicians and was taught by his father, also a respected percussionist in Venezuela.[48] Although Quintero is a well–rounded Latin percussionist, he is most well known for his *timbale* playing with artists like Oscar D'Leon, Tito Puente and Eddie Palmieri.[49] Quintero contributes his *timbale* playing to six of the ten tracks on *Paraiso*. This would be Luisito Quintero's only record with the CJP.

Dafnis Prieto grew up in Santa Clara, Cuba. He studied classical music at a young age at the Santa Clara School of Fine Arts before moving to Havana to study at the National School of Music in Havana, Cuba.[50] The combination of his classical

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[48] Louie Vega Presents Luisito Quintero: Percussion Maddness," BBE Music Website, 2013. http://www.bbemusic.com/releases/RR0060CD/Luisito%20Quintero%20-%20Louie%20Vega%20Presents%20Luisito%20Quintero:%20Percussion%20Maddness#.VxQjAMdlnUo (accessed April 16, 2016).

[49] Ibid.

[50] "Dafnis Prieto Biography," Dafnis Prieto/Dafnison Music Website, http://www.dafnisonmusic.com/live/ (accessed April 16, 2016).

music background and being immersed in the Afro-Cuban musical culture of his homeland gave him an exceptional breadth of musical knowledge. When he arrived in the United States in 1999, he quickly developed a reputation as one of the most creative and rhythmically advanced drummers in Latin jazz. His incredible polyrhythmic abilities are demonstrated on a "*timbale* drum kit" on four of the ten tracks on *Paraiso*. He also demonstrates his drumset prowess on the final track of the album, "Obaricoso/Ritmos, Colores, y Sentidos." His drumset playing on this piece foreshadows his playing on the next CJP album, *The Gathering*. In my interview with Samuels, he speaks about what Prieto added to the band:

> I met him when he had just come over from Cuba. Being a drummer myself, I was intrigued because he played some really interesting music. He would bring in his music, that was not easy to read; but, it didn't make any difference because it sounded so new and different. He did another record that Alain Mallet played on, it was also really great. He [Dafnis] was a really great drummer and he wrote great tunes. I spoke with him a couple months ago; he was doing a lot of writing and a little bit of playing. He was a strong personality.[51]

Replacing John Benitez on bass was Ruben Rodriguez. Rodriguez, who is of Puerto Rican descent, grew up in East Harlem, New York, but spent several years of his childhood in Puerto Rico.[52] His experiences as a youth in both New York and Puerto Rico gave him a strong foundation in the New York *salsa* tradition. He went on to make a career playing with some of the most prominent *salsa* artists of the 1970s and 1980s and had the opportunity to work with Latin jazz greats Machito

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[51] Dave Samuels, interview by author, 2015.

[52] Jim McSweeny, "Meet the Musicians: Ruben Rodriguez," Congahead website, http://www.congahead.com/legacy/Musicians/Meet_Musicians/Rodriguez/Rodriguez.html (accessed April 17, 2016).

and Tito Puente. Rodriguez brings a melodic and rhythmically creative style of playing to the CJP, which is reminiscent of long time Puente and Machito bass player, Bobby Rodriguez. Ruben Rodriguez credits Bobby as a major influence on his playing.[53]

Samuels added another twist to the CJP instrumentation on *Paraiso.* On selected arrangements, he invited three guest artist musicians from the Latin jazz community to play with the band. Renowned conga player and longtime member of Cal Tjader's band, Poncho Sanchez plays congas on Samuels' tune "Jamboree." trombonist Conrad Herwig added his talents to the CJP's popular arrangement of "Caravan" and trumpeter Ray Vega added flugelhorn to the CJP's arrangement of John Coltrane's "Naima." This was the first time that brass instruments were added to the group. Samuels speaks about what Vega and Herwig, in particular, brought to the project:

> Yes, Ray and Conrad, it was a fantastic group. These guys walk in and play the crap out of the music. All you have to do is say hello. They had a focus on style, intent and feel. It was an environment for people who liked improvising, taking a foundation and on that foundation coming up with different kind of time-feels and chordal developments so that it sounded like something completely different.[54]

After *Paraiso*, Dave Samuels once again wasted no time getting the CJP back into the studio to record *The Gathering*, the band's fifth album and third album in three years. With the release of the album in 2002, it was clear that the CJP was not just a side project for Samuels, but had become his primary musical focus. He had

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Dave Samuels, interview by author, 2015.

now been leading the group for almost a decade and was the only musician to appear on all five CJP records. In addition to Samuels, Dave Valentin was back co-leading the CJP for *The Gathering*; however, guitarist Steve Kahn, part of the lead trio for the previous two albums was no longer with the group. Paquito D'Rivera would reappear on this album as a special guest artist; this was D'Rivera's first time playing with the CJP since 1997. Bassist Ruben Rodriguez and percussionists Richie Flores and Dafnis Prieto also returned for this album; however, Prieto played drumset and Flores' duties were on bongo instead of congas.

Roberto Quintero, cousin of previous CJP percussionist Luisito Quintero, would join the group on congas for *The Gathering*. He was the only musician on the album that was completely new to the CJP. Although he was new to the band, he was an experienced veteran of South American and Afro-Caribbean percussion. Hailing from the musical Quintero family of Caracas, Venezuela, he received his first music lessons from his father at age seven and would go on to study at the Caracas Conservatory of Music.[55] His first prominent gig was with Venezuelan vocalist Oscar De Leon, with whom he toured for six years.[56] After leaving De Leon's band, Quintero moved to the United States and worked his way up through the New York *salsa* ranks, eventually joining Celia Cruz's band late in her career. Quintero must have made an impression on Samuels because in addition to *The Gathering,* Roberto Quintero would appear on three more CJP albums.

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[55] "Roberto Quintero Biography," Roberto Quintero Website, http://www.roberto-quintero.net/live/ (accessed April 17, 2016).

[56] Ibid.

With the exit of Kahn and his guitar, Samuels saw this as an opportunity to once again shift the musical direction of the CJP. He invited original CJP pianist Dario Eskanazi back for this recording. As greatly as it had altered the sound of the band when he departed, the re-addition of Eskanazi on piano changed the CJP's musical complexion. His contributions brought the group back to a more traditional Latin jazz musical aesthetic. Additionally, the return of the drumset, played by the Cuban Prieto, gave this band a more modern Afro-Cuban feel and sound than any of the previous versions of the CJP. Furthermore, the combination of Prieto, Rodriguez, Quintero and Flores, all virtuosos in their own right, provided a polyrhythmic energy that would not only match Samuels and Valentin, but push them to new levels of rhythmic experimentation.

The Gathering was also different in the sense that it was the most collectively created CJP album to date. On previous albums, the majority of the compositions were written or arranged by Samuels and the other band leaders; for *The Gathering,* five of the seven members of the group contributed compositions. In addition to Samuels and Valentin, who had been writing for the group for the previous two albums, Rodriguez, Flores and Prieto also added personal compositions to the album. Prieto, a budding composer, contributed two charts. Samuels says this about the unique working environment with this band:

> I was learning from them and was constantly influenced by them. From their standpoint, they got an opportunity to not just play *Songo* for six weeks. They got an opportunity to stretch themselves is a way they hadn't done before. Even for the guys playing in really good Latin bands, there were always certain spots that they didn't cover that really put them out there. It was really great music and it became much more of a dance music than what I was originally thinking

> about. We wanted the dance to be part of the music. You could superimpose the dance on top of all sorts of time feels.[57]

Continuing the trend of the previous two albums, *The Gathering* was the most stylistically focused CJP album to date. The album exclusively explored Afro-Cuban styles, offering modern interpretations of *rumba guaguanco, cha-cha-cha, mambo*, *Afro 12/8* and other hybrids of Cuban rhythms. Whereas the original version of the CJP gave the listener a tour of the Caribbean and South America, this band was a contemporary Afro-Cuban jazz band. Their arrangements were both rhythmically and harmonically complex, and the individual improvisations were quite sophisticated. *The Gathering* was awarded the 2003 Grammy award for "Best Latin Jazz Album." This was the first Grammy win for the CJP and the first win for Dave Samuels.

[57] Dave Samuels, interview by author, 2015.

CHAPTER 5

DAVE SAMUELS AND THE CARIBBEAN JAZZ PROJECT

With the release of CJP's next album, *Birds of a feather* in 2003, it was clear that the CJP had become Dave Samuels' band. Dave Valentin, the co-leader of the previous three albums, was no longer with the group; however, Samuels would once again surround himself with an equally impressive musical cast. Many of the core members of the band from the CJP's previous release, *The Gathering,* returned for *Birds of a Feather.*

What set this album apart from previous CJP releases was the presence of several guest artist musicians who contributed extensively to the musical aesthetics of the record. *Birds of a Feather* was actually recorded in two different sessions with two different bands. The first session included the current CJP lineup, many of whom were returning from *The Gathering*. Dario Eskanazi, Ruben Rodriquez, Dafnis Prieto and Roberto Quintero all joined Samuels for a second straight album. Additionally, trumpeter Ray Vega, who appeared on the CJP's 2001 release, *Paraiso*, was back to lend his talent on both trumpet and flugelhorn. This sextet would record six of the nine tracks on *Birds of a Feather*.

Several major guest artists would collaborate with Samuels, Eskanazi and Rodriguez for the second recording session, which resulted in three tracks that explored Brazilian musical styles. Well-known trumpet player and bandleader Randy Brecker, who had briefly worked with Samuels in Spyro Gyra, played trumpet and flugelhorn for this session. Original CJP drummer Mark Walker returned to add

his versatility and knowledge of Brazilian music. The Brazilian sound and swing on these three tracks was intensified by two experienced Brazilian musicians. The legendary Brazilian percussionist Edson Aparecido da Silva, better known as "Café," boosted the authenticity of the session with his extensive work on auxiliary percussion. Well-known Brazilian guitarist Romero Lubambo also played on this session and contributed one of his own compositions, "Valencia 1," to the album. The presence of Lubambo's guitar work was reminiscent of what Steve Kahn had done with the CJP on *New Horizons* and *Paraiso*, although, on *Birds of a feather* the guitar was used in conjunction with piano rather than in place of it.

The inclusion of such a diverse set of guests was yet another way for Samuels to experiment with the sound of the CJP. On the first five albums, brass instruments were seldom used, possibly due to the need for proper balance with quieter instruments such as the marimba, steel pans and flute. The prominence of the trumpet and flugelhorn played by Brecker and Vega gave the group a bolder sound that was characteristic of many Latin jazz bands. Furthermore, the presence of Brazilian musicians Romero Lubambo and Café broadened the stylistic focus of the band and returned the CJP to its pan-Latin roots. Although listeners would have to wait for Andy Narell to return on the forthcoming *Mosaics* album to hear the *calypsos* that were part of the band's original identity, the CJP would once again explore Brazilian musical styles on *Birds of a Feather*. One could argue that *Birds of a Feather* was Samuels and the CJP's most focused venture into Brazilian style. The product that resulted from this collaboration of diverse and talented musicians

would earn the CJP a second straight Grammy nomination for "Best Latin Jazz Album."

The CJP*'s* next release was a live, double-disc album titled *Here and Now-Live in Concert*, which was recorded over the course of three nights at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2004. The majority of the songs on this release had been recorded on previous albums and had become "standards" in the CJP's live repertoire. Samuels speaks about the band's popular arrangement of Dizzie Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia" which experiments with the groove, form and time signature of the classic Gillespie tune:

> We were doing so many different things, but at that point we had our standards, like "Night in Tunisia." It had become, not an opening number, but a tune that we played a lot and that we were known for. We always had fun with it. The more we played it-the more we disguised it and the more we disguised it-the more we looked for disguise. We had many tunes like this. In general, there was a growth in the music from the time we started out up to that point.[58]

This album gave CJP enthusiasts the chance to hear the band in a live, interactive environment. With Samuels leading the way, the band included the original CJP rhythm section of Dario Eskanazi on piano, Oscar Stagnaro on bass and Mark Walker on drums. Roberto Quintero was also back with the group for his third album. Eskanazi and Walker had both recorded with the CJP recently but this was Stagnaro's first record with the group since *Island Stories* in 1997. While it was the first recording that Samuels, Eskanazi, Stagnaro and Walker had all collaborated on in several years, this group was still very familiar with each other. They were all

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[58] Ibid.

colleagues on the faculty at Berklee College of Music and had been performing together quite often in a variety of different contexts. Samuels commented on how the band played together:

> That was a band that we had toured a lot with. I listen back to it and I can't believe how much energy it had. We were playing at these incredible tempos. I listen to it now and I don't know if I can play that long anymore. Also, the trick was to find "1", if you can't find "1," keep on looking. Roberto [Quintero) was a fantastic hand percussionist, he had so much energy and he could follow the odd time signatures ("Night in Tunisia" in 7) and make them sound smooth and easy. It was a really nice band.[59]

After collaborating with two trumpet players, Ray Vega and Randy Brecker, on the previous CJP studio album, *Birds of a Feather*, Samuels would again add the timbre of the trumpet and flugelhorn to the group. The only new member for the *Here and Now-Live in Concert* album was Argentinian trumpeter Diego Urcola, who, along with Walker and Stagnaro, had been a member of Paquito D'Rivera's Quintet for over a decade. Although this was Urcola's only recording with the band, he became a lasting member of the touring version of the CJP. This was the first and only live album that Samuels and CJP would release. It was well-received within the Latin jazz community and earned the group their third Grammy nomination for "Best Latin Jazz Album" in the previous four years.

The CJP's next album, *Mosaics*, was released in 2006. The album not only brought the CJP back to its pan-Latin roots, but also represented the long, weaving musical journey of Samuels as the band's leader. The album included players from

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[59] Ibid.

each of the previous seven CJP albums and, in true CJP style, also featured several new musical contributors. The result was a sophisticated musical collage, which created an image of the wide landscape of Afro-centric music in the Americas.

Several of the original band members including CJP co-founders Paquito D'Rivera and Andy Narell returned on *Mosaics*. The original trio, who had not played together in nine years, recorded three of the album's nine tracks with a rhythm section that also featured original CJP members Oscar Stagnaro on bass and Mark Walker on drums. Percussionist Pernell Saturnino, who played with the CJP on the band's second album *Island Stories,* would also return to the rhythm section for these three selections. Samuels, Narell and D'Rivera would each contribute one composition to this miniature 'album' within an album.

The eclectic pianist Alon Yavnai joined the CJP veterans for this portion of the album. Originally from Israel, Yavnai built a diverse career as performer. He had played with prominent jazz musicians from all over the world including legendary jazz pianists Oscar Peterson and Keith Jarrett, Brazilian singer and guitarist Joao Bosco, and well-known Israeli singer-songwriter Matti Caspi. Furthermore, Yavnai had been performing as a member of the Paquito D'Rivera Quintet for the previous five years. With significant experience in an array of Latin musical styles, he was right at home in the assorted musical environment of the CJP.

The remaining six selections on the album were recorded by a quintet of musicians which included Samuels, Dafnis Prieto, Roberto Quintero, Boris Kozlov and Alain Mallet. Of the five members, only Kozlov and Mallet were new to the group. This was the first time that acoustic bass, electric organ and accordion were

used in the band's instrumentation. These additions brought an interesting new musical texture to the CJP, which resulted in a sound that was unique to both the group and the Latin jazz genre.

Boris Kozlov, a celebrated young bass player in Russia, moved to New York in 1991 to pursue a career as a jazz musician. He played with some of New York's top musicians including Terry Gibbs, McCoy Tyner, Joe Locke, Conrad Herwig and Eddie Palmieri.[60] This would be Kozlov's only record with the CJP. Pianist Alain Mallet, originally from France, came to United States to study piano at Berklee College of Music. Mallet first worked with Samuels on his 1998 Cal Tjader tribute album, *Tjader-ized*. As colleagues on the faculty at Berklee, Mallet and Samuels developed a productive working relationship. Although this would be Mallet's only recording with the CJP, both his musicianship and the textural impact of the instruments he added are noteworthy. The electric organ brings a distinctive soul-jazz quality to the CJP, which was not only different for the band but was unique within the genre. Furthermore, the addition of accordion to Samuels' composition "Slow Dance," evokes a unique Argentine waltz character.

As an additional dynamic, Samuels added fellow Berklee colleague and renowned jazz violinist Christian Howes to the quintet for two compositions. Considered one of the world's premier jazz violinists, Howes added yet another unique component to the already eclectic panorama of sounds Samuels had

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[60] "Boris Kozlov Biography," Boris Kozlov Website, http://www.borisbass.com/live/ (accessed April 24, 2016).

assembled for this record. The addition of the violin on two Samuels' compositions, "Slow Dance" and "Spinnaker," gave the band a complete "sonic makeover." "Spinnaker" is a particularly unique composition on which Howes overlays a gypsy-jazz sound on top of the Afro-Cuban rhythmic backdrop of Prieto and Quintero.

In 2008, Dave Samuels released *Afro-Bop Alliance,* which was the ninth and final album under the CJP name. Samuels once again reinvented the sound of the CJP by using an entirely new band for this record. The album was recorded with the Maryland based Afro-Cuban jazz band, The Afro-Bop Alliance*,* led by drummer Joe McCarthy. Experimentation was a part of Samuels musical identity. In total, 27 different musicians had recorded with the CJP over the course of the first eight albums and each album featured a different lineup. Change had become part of the CJP identity; yet through all of this change, the size of the group stayed relatively consistent, only fluctuating between a quintet and septet. For *Afro-Bop Alliance*, Samuels drastically changed the size of the ensemble. He was now playing with a full big band, which included 19 other musicians. In the author's interview with Samuels, he speaks about the genesis of this large and unique endeavor:

> Joe McCarthy, the drummer, was in the military and was running this band, the Afro-Bop Alliance. I had done some smaller gigs with him in the Washington area and I asked one of the trombonists in the band, Dan Drew, to re-arrange some of the CJP tunes for a big band. He was very creative with the songs I gave him and his orchestrations were great. Because the arrangements were so good, Joe and I thought, we should try and record these, so we decided to make a record together. I had played in big bands when I was a drummer in high school but I hadn't played with one in years. I was excited to take this opportunity and record an album with a big band and it really popped.[61]

[61] Ibid.

Samuels had never played with a big band as a vibraphone player and although he sounds completely comfortable playing in this setting, the collaboration with Afro-Bop Alliance was both a challenge and a significant musical departure for him. Samuels says, "It was a completely different experience for me recording with a big band, I think it also creates a different experience for the listener as well, even though the tunes were tunes we had already recorded with the small group."[62] While the sound and instrumentation of this iteration of the CJP was very different, the musical material was familiar to CJP followers. The album was made up entirely of big band arrangements of Samuels' compositions that had been recorded on previous CJP albums. The presence of familiar musical material, along with Samuels' distinctive playing style, helped the *Afro-Bop Alliance* album maintain the CJP identity through the drastic change in instrumentation. Conga player Roberto Quintero, who had recorded with the CJP on three pervious occasions, also added a familiar musical touch and spirit, which provided another layer of musical continuity.

Afro-Bop Alliance featured five Samuels compositions and four of his arrangements of jazz standards, all of which were reconceived for a Latin jazz big band. The album included arrangements of songs from four previous CJP albums as well as two tracks, "Rendezvous" and "Soul Sauce," which were first recorded on Samuels' solo albums. "Rendezvous," which was originally released in 1989 on his

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[62] Ibid.

second solo album, *10 Degrees North*, was one of Samuels' first compositions with a Latin feel. It was also released on the fifth CJP project album, *The Gathering*, and became part of the group's standard repertoire. *Afro-Bop Alliance* also included Samuels' arrangement of the Cal Tjader classic, "Soul Sauce," which he had previously recorded on his Tjader tribute album *Tjader-ized*, which was released in 1998, during a break from the CJP.

The *Afro-Bop Alliance* album was a perfect illustration of both the consistency and change that characterized the evolution of the CJP. It was also a culmination of Samuels' dedication to this band. In this respect, it was only fitting that the album received the 2008 Latin Grammy Award for "Best Latin Jazz Album." From the beginning, the musical concept of the CJP was to unite jazz with the Afro-centric musical styles of the Caribbean and South America. Thanks to Samuels, over the course of fifteen years and nine albums, the concept never wavered. What did change, however, was the manner in which the music satisfied this goal. Although all of the CJP's music can be classified under the broad canopy of Latin jazz, each album had a very distinctive flavor. Multiculturalism was firmly imbedded within the musical identity of the CJP. The varied backgrounds and experiences of the different musicians on each album led to subtle but significant shifts in stylistic focus. When Samuels was asked about the band's multinational identity and wide stylistic breadth, he said:

> There was a transculturation going on. Where were you born? Where do you come from and do you dance the dance? But when it comes down to it, it's like being on a baseball team. Once you are up to bat, nobody cares where you are from. It's about playing together and community, and when that is happening it is infectious. Playing the

> music and dancing the music. Dancing the music means knowing how to move and listen. Where you are from and what you look like is secondary. When you are on the bandstand playing with people that are serious about playing, all that is important is what you sound like. Everything else, from my standpoint is secondary. When it feels good, everything is good. It was a really interesting time with a bunch of spectacular musicians, from different backgrounds that, at first, I knew nothing about. Also, they hadn't played with a vibe player, so they were curious how that was going to work as well. Nobody knew including myself, we just did it and made it sound like it fit together.[63]

As much as any other group in the history of genre, the CJP represented the inherent pluralism of the term Latin jazz. Their music is an artistic and respectful illustration of distinctive musical cultures from the Caribbean and South America. Furthermore, it is a representation of the collective sense of musical community that exists within all Afro-centric music. The following chapter will offer a brief examination of the diverse nature of the Latin jazz genre as it relates to the vague and potentially problematic use of the word "Latin" as a generic stylistic descriptor within jazz. Furthermore, it will include a discussion about the shared rhythmic phrasing concepts that exist within, and are critical to understanding, all forms of Afro-centric musical expression. Finally, the following chapter will exhibit how the drumset players and percussionists of the CJP used this knowledge to develop a unique stylistic approach within Latin jazz, which demonstrated deep knowledge of tradition and emphasized the innate similarities of all Afro-centric music of the Americas.

[63] Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

THE CARIBBEAN JAZZ PROJECT: LATIN JAZZ ROOTED IN TRADITION

The author believes that if you were to ask multiple musicians the definition of Latin jazz, you would receive multiple answers. Likewise, if you asked ten different drummers to play a "Latin" groove, you would hear several different grooves. The complexity of the word "Latin" within the phrase "Latin jazz" is a function of the fact that Latin jazz is a hybrid of an already fusion style of music which, over the course of several decades, has mutated and evolved into a multiplicity of subgenres and musical relatives. The result of this hybridity can be overwhelming for drumset players and percussionists, who, along with the rest of the rhythm section, are responsible for providing an appropriate and cohesive stylistic foundation for the music. In this chapter, the author will compare examples of traditional Latin and Caribbean rhythms to rhythms played by the drummers and percussionists of the CJP. This comparison will show how these players used their knowledge of traditional styles and the related key patterns to create authentic grooves, which appropriately supported and enhanced the CJP's unique brand of Latin jazz. Before going into detail about this topic, it is necessary to provide some historical context of the Latin jazz genre. The following section of this chapter will briefly outline the development of Latin jazz in order to help the reader understand how the genre became so diverse and why the generic use of the term "Latin" as a stylistic descriptor can be confusing for drumset players and percussionists.

BRIEF HISTORY OF LATIN JAZZ

Although it is acknowledged by performers and scholars alike that the origins of jazz itself are rooted in Caribbean rhythmic structure and feel, it was not until the 1940s that a branch of jazz developed that incorporated specific instruments, rhythms and musical forms from the Caribbean.[64] The most significant early Latin influence on jazz came from the island of Cuba. Although there were many important contributors, two Cuban musicians, Mario Bauzá and Chano Pozo, had a significant impact on the emergence of the first form of Latin jazz in the United States.

Bauzá's contributions came as the musical director of Machito and His Afro-Cubans, a New York based big band that was made up of both Latinos and African Americans. Under Bauza's guidance, Machito and His Afro-Cubans skillfully combined elements of Cuban dance music with an African-American swing band sound.[65] Chano Pozo, a celebrated conga player and composer from Cuba, joined Dizzie Gillespie's band in 1947. Pozo was well versed in both popular and folkloric drumming styles of Cuba. Although Gillespie's and Pozo's performing relationship lasted less than a year, this was the first time that bebop was combined with authentic Afro-Cuban rhythms and percussion instruments.[66] By the late 1940s, this

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[64] Christopher Washburne, "Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz," 411.

[65] John Storm Roberts, *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today,* New York: Schirmer Books, 1999, 67.

[66] Roberts, *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today,* 76.

new style of jazz pioneered by Bauzá, Pozo, and others became known as "Afro-Cuban jazz" or "cubop."

In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, artists like Tito Puente, George Shearing, Stan Kenton and Cal Tjader continued to experiment with and develop Afro-Cuban jazz. These band leaders were supported by several important Cuban percussionists who came to the United States and continued the Afro-Cuban percussion movement started by Chano Pozo. Among these were Mongo Santamaria, Francisco Aguabella, Armando Peraza, Cándido Camero and Patato Valdés, who, over the next several decades, would greatly influence the sound of several musical genres including jazz, funk, rock and R&B.[67] Santamaria's and Peraza's collaborations with vibraphonist Cal Tjader were particularly significant, because they helped establish the presence of Latin jazz on the West Coast. The style and sound of Tjader's band, which was characterized by the combination of vibraphone and piano with Afro-Cuban percussion instruments, was the first of its kind and has remained a large part of the identity of Latin jazz. A direct link can be seen between Tjader's work and the music of Dave Samuels and the CJP.

The labels, "Afro-Cuban jazz" and "cubop," were largely sufficient through the 1950s. However, a change would occur in the 1960s when the popularity of the Brazilian *bossa nova* moved beyond its South American borders and reached the United States. Author and Latin jazz scholar John Storm Roberts states:

[67] Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz,* Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 2006, 83.

> The huge success of the jazz-bossa tends to be treated as if it were some short lived 1960s fad, like the Twist. Perhaps this is because few revolutionaries have ever had so much charm. But charm or no, the jazz-bossa began a process that has, over three decades, brought the Brazilian tinge in jazz from an intermittent fringe activity to a role as important as that of Cuban music, though in a rather different way.[68]

By the mid 1960s, the phrase "Afro-Cuban jazz" was becoming problematic. With the arrival of Brazilian inspired jazz in the United States, the need for a new, broader label for the genre was in order. Although the term "Latin jazz" was occasionally used prior to this Brazilian infusion, in the 1960s it began to be used more often as a generic term to describe any form of music which blended jazz with rhythms from south of the United States border. Much of the stylistic confusion that exists in Latin jazz today stems from this labeling dilemma.

Through the 1960s many American jazz musicians cultivated an "Americanized" strain of Latin-inspired jazz, which did not incorporate traditional instruments or rhythms, yet offered an essence of Caribbean and Latin American rhythmic feel. These tunes typically combined short, tuneful melodies with simple jazz harmonies over a syncopated, straight eighth-note rhythmic feel. Compositions like "Song for My Father" by Horace Silver, "St. Thomas" by Sonny Rollins, and Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man" and "Cantaloupe Island" are representative of this early style of Latin-jazz-funk fusion. Roberts speaks about the development of this style:

> All this represented a second stage of jazz/Latin absorption. . . jazz musicians were making Latin elements into something new rather

[68] Roberts, *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today,* 115.

> than incorporating them into jazz unchanged. Herbie Hancock's March 1965 "Maiden Voyage" is a case and point. Here the Latinisms in the basic rhythmic groove open out and become much lighter, and are mostly sustained on the cymbals. This is not yet fully formed funk, but it has a "mainstream" jazz quality that—though it could not exist without its earlier and more Latin stages—was no longer obviously "Latin."[69]

On the East Coast in the 1970s a separation occurred between traditional Latin music and jazz. This was due to the development of two drastically different but parallel musical currents, New York *salsa* and jazz-fusion. Although *Salsa* was influenced by several popular dance styles from the Caribbean, it is a direct descendent of the Cuban dance style known as the *son*.[70] *Salsa* music was the torchbearer for *típico,* or traditional Cuban style because it preserved many of the musical characteristics of early Cuban popular music. Specific characteristics of the *son's* instrumentation, form and rhythm style can all be found in *salsa* music. As a result, most Latino percussionists in New York City, specifically those of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent, gravitated toward *salsa* rather than the simultaneously developing genre of jazz-fusion. Some of the most influential percussionists in New York *salsa* during this time were Tito Puente, Ray Baretto, and Manny Oquendo.

The jazz-fusion movement, which was led by musicians such as Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Miles Davis, Chick Corea and the band Weather Report, changed the identity of the jazz in the 1970s. This new form of jazz dissolved stylistic boundaries by incorporating elements of rock, funk, blues and Latin music.

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[69] Roberts, *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today, 152.*
[70] Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz,* 14.

The development of "fusion," as the genre is commonly called, was largely responsible for popularizing a hybrid style of drumming that combined Latin inspired rhythmic syncopations with elements of jazz, funk and rock drumming. Although, the scope of this document will not allow for a discussion of all of the drummers and percussionists who contributed to the development of this playing style, it will briefly examine the contributions of Airto Moreira and Alex Acuña, two drummer-percussionists who incorporated elements of authentic Caribbean and South American rhythms into jazz-fusion.

Both Airto and Acuña played in the seminal fusion group Weather Report. Airto only played percussion on Weather Report's first album, yet he set the tone for the use of Latin percussion in the band and the fusion genre for years to come. Airto also recorded and toured with Miles Davis during the early 1970s. He can be heard on Davis' experimental recording *Bitches Brew,* which was released in 1970. In 1972, Airto joined pianist Chick Corea in the band Return to Forever. As the drumset player for Return to Forever, Airto added a noticeably Latin flavor to the group's first two albums, *Return to Forever* and *Light as a Feather*. Alex Acuña, an accomplished drummer and percussionist from Peru, was well versed in Caribbean styles in addition to the rhythms of his South American home.[71] Acuña joined Weather Report in the late 1970s for what would be two of the band's most popular

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[71] John Ephland, "Alex Acuna: Command in All Directions," Drummagazine.com, September 21, 2011, http://www.drummagazine.com/hand-drum/post/alex-acuntildea-command-in-all-directions1/ (accessed May 12, 2016).

albums, *Black Market* and *Heavy Weather*. Both Airto and Acuña's contributions in the jazz-fusion genre were instrumental in establishing a hybrid style of Latin jazz drumset and percussion performance, which was rooted in knowledge of traditional rhythms from Caribbean and South America.

As other genres of American music such as rock, funk and R&B began to incorporate elements of Latin music, the musical definition of a "Latin feel" in the United States expanded and became even more ambiguous. For example, in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, R&B (rhythm and blues) and funk musicians like Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield and James Brown often incorporated congas, bongos and other Latin percussion instruments into their music. The American percussionists who performed with these artists were rarely trained in specific Latin or Caribbean traditions. They developed their own style of playing using non-traditional techniques and rhythmic patterns that were designed to fit the music. This style of playing, though not traditional, was a significant development in the use of Latin percussion in American popular music.

In the 1980s, the Brazilian influence on jazz remained strong with the arrival of two female pianists, Tania Maria and Elaine Elias later in the decade.[72] Cuban expatriates like Paquito D'Rivera and Arturo Sandoval, both former members of the influential Cuban fusion group Irakere, developed a reputation for combining lesser known styles from Latin America and the Caribbean with jazz. Furthermore, several musicians revisited the idea of combining jazz with serious Afro-Cuban folkloric

[72] Roberts, *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today,* 194.

music. This hybrid, which was first experimented with in the 1950s by percussionist like Mongo Santamaria, Francisco Aguabella, Armando Peraza, Cándido Camero and Patato Valdés, was explored again in the 1980s. Although the early experiments by Santamaria and others were quite revolutionary, they sound somewhat forced and unnatural by today's standards. When the idea was rekindled in the 1980s the precedent for this unique hybrid had already been set. Artists like Jerry Gonzalez & the Fort Apache Band, Bakateo, New Yor-Uba and Daniel Ponce fused the two traditions organically into creative form of Afro-Cuban folkloric jazz.[73]

By the end of the 1980s the term Latin jazz had grown into its current broad and somewhat overwhelming musical connotation. At this point, American and Latino musicians had experimented with combining Latin and Caribbean music and jazz in different ways for over four decades. The early links to Cuban musical traditions set the tone for the use of Afro-Cuban percussion instruments and rhythms in jazz. The influence of Brazilian percussion and rhythms, which began in the 1960s, remained strong in later decades and can still be noticed today. In the 1970s, R&B, funk and jazz-fusion led to the development of a non-specific hybrid style of "Latin" drumset and percussion performance, which paralleled the *típico* style of playing that was adopted and then developed by percussionists in the New York *salsa* scene. In the 1980s, a reconnection between jazz and Cuban popular music plus a new interest in folkloric and lesser-known Latin and Caribbean music styles brought on the "second coming" of Latin jazz.

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[73] Roberts, *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today,* 219.

The great stylistic diversity that now exists in Latin jazz is a culmination of all of the developments mentioned above. Due to the diverse nature of the genre, it is important for drumset players and percussionists working in this idiom to have knowledge of the rhythmic characteristics of several different traditional Latin American and Caribbean musical styles. That being said, it is not always necessary or even desirable to try and incorporate specific traditional rhythms into every playing situation. Although one can dance to Latin jazz, it is not traditional Latin dance music like the *son*, *salsa*, *bomba* or *cumbia*; instead it is a hybrid art, which allows it to take on different forms and serve many different purposes. Therefore, when playing Latin jazz, drumset players and percussionists need to be able to play both traditional and non-traditional Latin grooves. When determining what type of groove to play, the decision should be informed by the context of the performance coupled with a broad understanding of the rhythmic phrasing concepts of Afro-centric music.

UNDERSTANDING AFRO-CENTRIC RHYTHMIC PHRASING THROUGH KEY PATTERNS

When first studying Latin and Caribbean music, there is a tendency for drumset players and percussionists to over-compartmentalize each style. In the author's opinion this is because, in an effort to learn and memorize each rhythm, the tendency is to focus on the differences between the rhythms rather than the potential similarities. The author believes it would be an oversimplification to say that all Latin and Caribbean rhythms are similar; however, the concept of

superimposing a consistently repeating pattern of uneven rhythmic groupings onto a consistent pulse is of African origin and is shared by virtually all forms of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin dance music. Within the music, this repetitive pattern serves as a guide or "key" for the rhythmic phrasing of a particular style.[74] For the purposes of this document, the author will refer to these rhythmic cycles as "key patterns." This phrase was suggested by Dr. Eugene Novotney in his doctoral dissertation titled, "The 3:2 Relationship as the Foundation of Timelines in West African Musics."[75] It is critical for drumset players and percussionists to understand the function and rhythmic characteristics of key patterns in Afro-centric music. Furthermore, discovering the inherent rhythmic similarities of different key patterns will help drumset players and percussionists creatively unite different forms of Afro-centric musical expression in fusion styles such as Latin jazz.

Although these key patterns manifest themselves in a variety of forms throughout Latin and Caribbean music, two of the most commonly found key patterns are known as the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* (see fig. 6.1).[76] The names of these patterns are based on the amount of subdivisions played in each figure. In this context, the Spanish word *tresillo* translates to three notes and the Spanish word *cinquillo* translates to five notes. Christopher Washburne describes the unequal

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[74] John Santos, "The Clave: Cornerstone of Cuban Music," *Modern Drummer*, September 1986, 32.

[75] Eugene Domenic Novotney, "The 3:2 Relationship as the Foundation of Timelines in West African Musics," DMA diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1998, 165.

[76] Floyd Jr., Samuel A. Floyd Jr., "Black Music in the Circum-Caribbean," *American Music* 17, no.1 (spring 1999): 6.

rhythmic groupings of the *tresillo* as a 3+3+2 division of an eight subdivision measure; and the *cinquillo* as a (2+1)+(2+1)+2 division of an eight subdivision measure.[77] There has been much debate about the relationship of these two key patterns. Some musicologists suggest that the *tresillo* is a derivative of the *cinquillo*, others say the opposite. Regardless of origin, these two rhythms are quite similar. The mathematical relationship of the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* is such that the two rhythms fit together and therefore compliment one other. The rhythmic undertones of these two key patterns are recognized in several Afro-Caribbean styles such as *calypso, soca, bomba,* and *beguine*, as well as several Afro-Brazilian styles such as *baião, afoxe* and *maracatu*.

[77] Christopher Washburne, "The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an American Music," *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 1 (Spring, 1997), 66.

Tresillo
Cinquillo
Afro-Cuban Key Pattern
Rumba Clave
Son Clave
Bossa Nova Key Pattern
Samba Batucada Key Pattern
Partido Alto Key Pattern

Figure 6.1. Afro-centric Key Patterns

Another commonly discussed key pattern in Latin music is known by several different names including: the standard bell pattern; African bell pattern; Afro-Cuban bell pattern; 6/8 bell pattern; 12/8 bell pattern and many others. Due to the context of this discussion, which is centered on Latin and Caribbean music, this will be referred to as the Afro-Cuban key pattern (see fig. 6.1). This rhythm serves as the

key pattern for the majority of Afro-Cuban folkloric music. It is based on a 12 eighth-note measure that is typically felt in four strong pulses of three subdivisions each. A unique feature of the Afro-Cuban key pattern is that it can be divided into two rhythmic halves or sides, each of which can serve as the beginning of the musical phrase (see fig. 6.2). The two halves of this key pattern are distinguished by a syncopated side that creates rhythmic tension and a downbeat side, where this tension is resolved. In Figure 6.2, the two sides are indicated by an asterisk.

Rumba Clave
Afro-Cuban Key Pattern
Son Clave
Bossa Nova Key Pattern
Samba Batucada Key Pattern
Partido Alto Key Pattern

Figure 6.2. Key Patterns with Two Starting Points

The duple counterpart to the Afro-Cuban key pattern is the Cuban rhythm known as *clave* (see fig. 6.1), which serves as the key pattern for most Cuban popular music as well as several folkloric styles. There are two types of *clave* used in Cuban music, *son clave* and *rumba clave*. *Son clave* was developed and is used in the popular dance music styles of Cuba, while *rumba clave* is most often associated with Afro-Cuban folkloric music. Like the Afro-Cuban key pattern, *clave* is felt in four strong pulses; however, instead of three rhythmic subdivisions per pulse, it is felt with four subdivisions per pulse.

Although different on paper, *clave* and the Afro-Cuban key pattern are very much the same in function and phrasing. It is commonly thought that *clave* is a derivative of the Afro-Cuban key pattern because the rhythmic placement of the five notes of *clave* correspond closely to five of the seven notes of the Afro-Cuban key pattern (see fig. 6.2).[78] This is very evident when the two patterns are played using a lenient interpretation of Western rhythmic structure, which Afro-Cuban musician and scholar Michael Spiro calls "fix" because the placement of the rhythm falls in between a strict four and six note subdivision.[79] As with the Afro-Cuban key pattern, there are two distinct rhythmic halves to *clave*, which are differentiated by the amount of strokes in each. The three-note side is considered the "upbeat" side because it is more syncopated. The two-note side is considered the "downbeat" side

[78]Aquista, Andrew Aquista, "Tresillo: A Rhythmic Framework Connecting Differing Rhythmic Styles" (master's thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2009), 11.

[79] Michael Spiro, *The Conga Drummer's Guidebook*, Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 2006, 38.

because the two notes fall on downbeats. Each side of *clave* can serve as the beginning of the musical phrase. This concept is often referred to as the "direction" of the *clave* and is described either as 3:2 or 2:3 depending on whether the musical phrase begins on the three-note side or two-note side of the rhythm. When playing in a Cuban style, it is important for all elements of the music to be "in *clave*." This means that the rhythmic phrasing of the melody, accompaniment and subsequent improvisations follow the rhythmic structure defined by the three side (upbeat side) and two side (downbeat side) of the rhythm. The specific rhythmic characteristics and similarities of *clave* and the Afro-Cuban key pattern can be seen in Figure 6.2.

A common rhythmic pattern that is played in the Brazilian *bossa nova* style is similar to the Cuban *son clave*. I will refer to this as the *bossa nova* key pattern (see fig. 6.1). Like *clave* and the Afro-Cuban key pattern, there are two halves to this rhythm, both of which can serve as the beginning of the musical phrase (see fig. 6.2). Although the *bossa nova* key pattern is almost identical to *son clave*, there is one important rhythmic difference; the second note of the two note side of the rhythm is delayed by one eighth note subdivision. This subtle yet important change creates a significant difference in the rhythmic feel of this key pattern when compared to *son clave*. The syncopation of this note delays the rhythmic resolution of the *bossa nova* key pattern. Whereas *son clave* has a feeling of resolution on the last note of the pattern, the bossa nova key pattern does not feel like it resolves until the first note of the three-note side of the pattern. This small change amplifies the cyclical nature of the *bossa nova* key pattern. It is worth mentioning that this rhythm is often

referred to as "*bossa nova clave*;" however, this is incorrect. The word *clave* is a Cuban musical term and is not a part of Brazilian musical vocabulary.

Key patterns are also used in the *samba* music of Brazil. At times, these key patterns are overtly expressed in the music and in other instances they serve as a rhythmic outline, which permeates the music below the surface. Figure 6.1 includes two common key patterns used in *samba*. In this document, the pattern referred to as the *samba batucada* key pattern is a rhythm often played by the *tamborim* in the carnival style of *samba* known as *samba batucada*. The pattern referred to as the *partido alto* key pattern is a rhythm that comes from an older folk style of *samba* known as "*samba do partido alto*." These two key patterns can be considered variations of one rhythmic idea. Notice how if one were to begin the *samba batucada* key pattern on beat two and remove the second upbeat eighth note, it would be the exact same rhythms as the *partido alto* key pattern (see fig. 6.3). Like the other two-sided key patterns discussed, the *samba batucada* key pattern and the *partido alto* key pattern have an upbeat side and a downbeat side, both of which can function as the beginning of the musical phrase (see fig. 6.2).

Samba Batucada Key Pattern

Partido Alto Key Pattern

Samba Batucada Key Pattern Starting on Beat Two

Figure 6.3. *Samba Batucada* and *Partido Alto* Key Patterns

The reason the author has suggested it is important for drumset players and percussionists to understand traditional Latin and Caribbean styles is not because these rhythms should always be used when playing Latin jazz; rather, this knowledge can help drumset players and percussionists bring a stylistically appropriate and cohesive rhythmic feel to the music. By acquiring knowledge of specific rhythms from the varied musical traditions of Latin America and the Caribbean, drumset players and percussionists will become aware of key patterns and develop a better understanding of how they function in the Afro-centric music of the Americas. Michael Spiro says:

> It is essential to understand that although *clave* is specifically a Cuban musical term, it is still the organizing principle that exists throughout almost all Afro-centric music of the Americas, from Bo Diddly grooves to Brazilian *samba*. Cuban musicians speak and think about *clave* as a matter of course—it is the expressed foundation of their music and thus the primary focus when playing and arranging. However, Brazilian musicians do not refer to the word *clave* in their musical

vocabulary, nor is it an overtly stated concept for them. Nevertheless, Afro-Brazilian music is played in *clave*.[80]

For drumset players and percussionists, this understanding will not only lead to increased versatility and authenticity when performing Latin jazz, it will also stimulate creativity when creating new hybrid forms of Afro-centric musical expression. In the following section of this chapter, the author will showcase how the drum set players and percussionists of the CJP used knowledge of specific Latin and Caribbean styles, as well as the related key patterns, to incorporate these musical traditions into their innovative style of Latin jazz.

STYLISTIC APPROACH OF THE DRUMSET PLAYERS AND PERCUSSIONISTS OF THE CARIBBEAN JAZZ PROJECT

The CJP'*s* musical depth comes from their ability to integrate a tremendous amount of authenticity into a musically diverse and creative compositional style. Achieving this required the performers to have significant knowledge and experience performing in traditional, or *típico,* musical settings. *Típico*, which literally translates to "typical" or "characteristic," is a generic term used throughout Latin music to identify the traditional popular music styles of Latin American countries.[81] It is particularly important for drumset players and percussionists to have working knowledge of *típico* and folkloric rhythms as well as the key patterns around which this music is organized. This knowledge not only allows the

[80]Spiro, *The Conga Drummer's Guidebook*, 16.

[81] Roberts, *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today,* 258.

performers to play in traditional settings, but helps them understand how key patterns both define and unite all forms of Afro-centric musical expression.

In the next section of the chapter, the author will compare examples of traditional Latin and Caribbean rhythms to those played by the drummers and percussionists of the CJP. This comparison will show how these players used their knowledge of traditional styles and the related key patterns to create authentic grooves, which appropriately supported and enhanced the CJP's unique brand of Latin jazz. It is the author's hope that through this examination the reader will not only develop a better understanding of specific musical traditions, but also develop an understanding of the inherent similarities of all Afro-centric music of the Americas, which can be used to integrate tradition into hybrid musical styles such as Latin jazz.

Ethnomusicologist and Caribbean music expert Shannon Dudley says that when describing the rhythmic character of Caribbean music, it is not enough to explain the individual parts of the music because the music is ultimately perceived as a composite of those parts.[82] The author agrees with Dudley and believes this statement can be broadened to include all forms of Afro-centric music in the Americas. Therefore, the stylistic comparisons in this section will be presented with a focus on the composite rhythm of the style and how it relates to the key pattern associated with each style. This approach will allow the reader to both understand

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[82] Shannon Dudley, "Judging 'By the Beat': Calypso versus Soca," *Ethnomusicology* 40, no. 2 (Spring-Summer, 1996), 274.

the similarities that exist within Afro-centric music of the Americas and to recognize the defining rhythmic characteristics of each individual style.

"Three Amigos"

As mentioned earlier in this document, many Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Brazilian styles of music use the *tresillo* key pattern as a rhythmic foundation. The CJP's used their awareness of the *tresillo* to creatively combine rhythmic aspects of multiple musical styles into single compositions. One example of this is Andy Narell's composition "Three Amigos," which was recorded on the band's first album, *The Caribbean Jazz Project*. In this composition, the rhythm section uses the *tresillo* as a common rhythmic thread. This allows the group to organically shift back and forth between, and combine, the *calypso* and *baião* styles.

The first groove used in "Three Amigos" is a steel band style *calypso* groove found in the steel band tradition of Trinidad and Tobago (see fig. 6.4). The rhythm section, or "engine room," of a steel band typically includes drumset, congas, iron and a metal scraper. The *tresillo* key pattern is prominently heard in the composite rhythm of these four parts. Although there are many variations, the *calypso* drumset groove is defined by the fixed rhythmic pattern of the kick drum, which plays on beat 1 and the "and" of beat 2. These strokes coincide with the first two notes of the *tresillo*. The third note of the *tresillo*, on beat 4, is emphasized by an accent on the hi-hat or ride cymbal and is often supplemented with accent on the snare drum. The rhythmic outline of the *tresillo* is also easily noticed in the conga part, which has accents that fall on all three notes of the key pattern. The iron and scraper both play

constant eighth note subdivisions and often emphasize beat 2 and beat 4 with subtle accents. Included in Figure 6.4 are two of the most common iron variations, which can be played independently, but are often played simultaneously to create an interlocking rhythm. The beat 4 accent in the iron #1 and scraper parts matches the corresponding accent in the drumset and conga part, further emphasizing the third note of the *tresillo* key pattern. Refer to Appendix C for drumset and conga notation keys.

Figure 6.4. Traditional Steel Band *Calypso*, Trinidad & Tobago

It is evident that Mark Walker and Luis Conte, the drumset player and conga player on "Three Amigos," had a thorough understanding of the *calypso* style and its inherent key pattern, the *tresillo*. Walker and Conte's playing is both cohesive and authentic. Figure 6.5 presents two *calypso* groove variations played by Walker and Conte on "Three Amigos;" they are labeled "introduction" and "A Section." The similarities between these variations and the traditional calypso grooves presented in Figure 6.4 are easily observed. Conte's conga pattern also bears many similarities to the rhythm played by the *buleador* drum from the *bomba* musical tradition. *Bomba*, which is a folkloric style of music from Puerto Rico, also uses the *tresillo* key pattern. Although both Walker and Conte improvise around these basic patterns, the composite rhythm of the drumset and congas always stays true to *calypso's* rhythmic character, which is governed by the outlining *tresillo* key pattern. The addition of the steady scraper and iron parts during the A section (see fig. 6.5) further emphasize the authentic *calypso* sound and rhythmic feel.

Figure 6.5. *Calypso* Variations, “Three Amigos”

Later in the arrangement, Walker and Conte use Dave Samuels’ vibraphone solo as an opportunity to change the rhythmic feel. Instead of playing a straight-ahead *calypso*, they create a hybrid groove, which emphasizes the similarities between *calypso* and the Brazilian rhythm known as the *baião*. The *baião*, like the *calypso*, has a rhythmic framework that is based around the *tresillo* key pattern (see fig. 6.6). A traditional *baião* percussion section is comprised of the *zabumba*, pandeiro, triangle and *agogo*; the *ganza* (shaker) and *caixa* (snare drum) are often added for color.[83] The *zabumba*, which is the bass drum of the *baião* style, is

[83]Alberto Netto, *Brazilian Rhythms for Drum Set and Percussion*, Boston, Berklee Press, 2003, 73.

traditionally played using one mallet and one thin stick called a *bacalhau*. In the basic *zabumba* part, the player accents beat 1 and the "and" of beat 2 with the mallet while the *bacalhau* keeps a consistent rhythm on beat 2 and beat 4. The rhythm of the *zabumba* is identical to the composite accent pattern of the *calypso* drumset part presented in Figure 6.4. Both the *zabumba* part and the *calypso* drumset part closely follow the *tresillo* key pattern.

Tresillo Key Pattern
Agogo Bell
Triangle
Pandeiro
Caixa
Zabumba
Ganza

Figure 6.6. Traditional *Baião* Percussion Rhythm, Northeast Brazil

At the beginning of Samuels' vibraphone solo, both Walker and Conte play the same *calypso* groove that they used in the introduction; however, this time, instead of the scraper, they are accompanied by the *baião* triangle pattern (see fig. 6.7). The use of the triangle begins the shift from Trinidadian to Brazilian musical aesthetics. When the A section of the solo begins, a Brazilian shaker known as a *ganza* is added to the musical texture in order to intensify the Brazilian feel. Although drumset is not traditionally a part of the *baião* style, for the A section of the vibraphone solo Walker switches to a drumset groove that can be considered a combination of the *zabumba* and *caixa* parts (see fig 6.7). Although the auxiliary percussion and drumset are now playing a *baião*, Conte continues to play a variation of a *calypso* conga pattern throughout the A section of the vibraphone solo (see fig 6.7). One might think that this would create a rhythmic conflict, but because the *calypso* and *baião* are both built around the *tresillo* key pattern, the *calypso* groove used by Conte fits perfectly with its *baião* counterparts.

Figure 6.7. *Baião-Calypso* Hybrid Variations, “Three Amigos”

“Night in Tunisia”

In 1942, Dizzie Gillespie wrote his famous composition “Night in Tunisia.” It is a significant piece in the jazz repertoire because it was one of the first jazz works to incorporate a pseudo-Latin, straight eighth-note feel into a swing tune. The original version of the work juxtaposes a straight eighth-note A section with a B section in a traditional swing style. The use of a straight eighth note feel in jazz was uncommon at the time, but supplied the appropriate rhythmic framework for integrating rhythms from south of the United States border. “Night in Tunisa”

became a standard in the jazz repertoire and is a classic representative of the early Latin jazz movement.

The author feels that CJP's arrangement of "Night in Tunisia" is a very innovative interpretation of Gillespie's classic tune. It is also representative of the band's ability to creatively integrate traditional Latin and Caribbean rhythms into jazz. Originally recorded on the CJP's *New Horizons* album in 2000, the arrangement became a standard in the band's repertoire and was included again on the CJP's 2006 live release *Here and Now*. CJP drummer Mark Walker speaks about how the band approached the tune when playing in a live context:

> The time signatures were set in the arrangement but we did experiment with the style. For example, with "Night in Tunisia" we might not play Afro-Cuban and then we would swing on the bridge. We might go into a completely different rhythm like a halftime cha-cha feel or something completely different. If someone led us into something, sometimes Paquito or I would lead it by our phrasing, we would just go into it and have fun with it. We always left it open to improvisation.[84]

In live performance the band treated this song as a laboratory for stylistic experimentation; however, on the *New Horizons* album the band integrated two specific Afro-Cuban styles into the form of the composition. The band plays in a *mambo* style for the A section, then switches to a Havana-style *rumba guaguanco* for the B section of the melody.

Another unique aspect of the CJP's arrangement of "Night in Tunisia" is that the A section is played in a seven beat cycle, rather than the standard eight beats

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[84] Mark Walker, Interview by author, 2016.

that are in Gillespie's original composition. This is in contrast to the B section, in which the CJP adheres to the standard four beats per measure. When branching out into traditional Latin and Caribbean stylistic explorations, playing "in seven" creates an additional challenge for the performers. The rhythms of Latin America and the Caribbean are not traditionally played in seven, so both the key pattern and the individual parts must be adjusted to fit the rhythmic cycle.

In Cuban styles such as *mambo* and *rumba guaguanco*, the key pattern used is the Cuban rhythm known as *clave*. *Mambo*, which is a traditional Cuban popular music style, uses the *son clave* key pattern (see fig. 6.8). *Rumba guaguanco*, a folkloric style of Cuban music, uses the *rumba clave* key pattern. Neither of these key patterns are traditionally played in seven. Rather than abandon the important organizational concept of *clave* altogether, the CJP chose to modify its structure by moving the third note of the three-side of *clave* to fit into the seven beat cycle. The result of this adjustment is a new "*clave* in seven" key pattern, which retains the contrasting two-note and three-note sides that are crucial in defining the two halves of the *clave* phrase (see fig. 6.9).

Figure 6.8. *Típico Mambo* Percussion Section

After defining the "*clave* in seven" for the A section of "Night in Tunisia," the members of rhythm section had to create hybrid *mambo* parts that fit into this atypical rhythmic cycle. *New Horizons* percussionists Robert Vilera and Richie Flores both created rhythmic patterns in a seven beat cycle that maintained the defining characteristics of a *mambo*. Rather than a drumset or *timbales*, Vilera played a "*timbale*-kit," which is hybrid percussion setup that incorporates elements of both instruments. For this *mambo* in seven, Vilera adjusts the traditional *mambo* bell pattern played on the *timbales* by omitting the last beat (see fig 6.9). However, in order to preserve the traditional feel of the *mambo*, he phrases the accents of the *mambo* bell pattern just as one would in a *típico mambo* setting. Furthermore, Vilera's "comping" on the snare drum and bass drum follow the *clave* rhythmic structure. With the bass drum, Vilera emphasizes beat 1 of the two-note side of

"*clave* in seven" and the "and" of beat 2 on the three-side. This syncopated accent on the three side of *clave*, known as the *bombo* note, is a defining characteristic of *clave* and is a common phrasing point in all Afro-Cuban music.

Clave "in 7"
Timbal-kit Mambo bell "in 7"
O T S T H T O O H T S O O T O T S T H T O O H T S O O T
Conga Tumbao "in 7"
Bongo Bell "in 7"

Figure 6.9. "Night in Tunisia," *Mambo* in 7

Like Vilera, conga player Richie Flores creates a variation of the *tumbao* conga pattern for "Night in Tunisia" that retains the character of a *típico mambo* percussion section. The *tumbao*, which is a Cuban conga pattern used in *mambo* and several other styles of Cuban popular music, is defined by a slap tone on beat two and open tones on beat four and the "and" of beat four (see fig. 6.8, variation 1). There are several variations of two-drum *tumbao* patterns, many of which define the three-note side of *clave* by emphasizing the *bombo* note on the lower drum (see fig. 6.8, variation 2). For "Night in Tunisia," Flores modifies this two-drum *tumbao* pattern to fit into the seven beat cycle by eliminating the last two open tones of the pattern (see fig 6.9). However, Flores still defines the three-note side of the "*clave* in

seven" by emphasizing the *bombo* note on the lower drum. He also preserves the traditional *tumbao* feel by keeping the two-side of the "*tumbao* in seven" pattern identical to the two-side of the traditional *tumbao*.

For the B section of "Night in Tunisia" the time signature is back in the standard four beat cycle; however, instead of using a swing feel, which is traditionally played in Gillespie's arrangement, the CJP chooses to play in Cuban *rumba guaguanco* style. *Rumba guaguanco* is a folkloric style of Cuban dance music that is sung in a call and response fashion between a lead singer and a chorus. The lead singer, who often plays the *clave* instrument in the group, is accompanied by a battery of percussion instruments that includes *palitos* (sticks), *chekere* (gourd shaker) and three conga players playing individual but interlocking melodic parts. There are many styles of *guaguanco* played across the island of Cuba, each of which is defined by the composite melody created by the full percussion battery. Regardless of regional differences in playing style across the island, all forms of *guaguanco* use the *rumba clave* key pattern as a foundation. The Havana style of *guaguanco*, which the author considers the most well-known outside the island, is defined by a distinctive *segundo* drum part, which has two open tones. These two open tones fall on beat one and the "and" of beat two on the two-side of *clave* (see fig. 6.10). Furthermore, the cyclical nature of the rhythm is defined by the composite melody of the tones played by the *segundo* drum and the *tumbadora* drum. The *segundo*, which has an intermediate pitch, and the *tumbadora*, which has the lowest pitch, are considered the supporting parts. They work along with the *claves*, *palitos* and *chekere* to create both a melodic and rhythmic framework for the

singers and the *quinto* drum. The *quinto* drum, which is the highest in pitch, plays a highly improvisatory part that both inspires and is inspired by the movements of the *guaguanco* dancers. Figure 6.10 shows a sample *quinto* "ride" pattern along with the *clave*, *palitos*, *chekere* and the standard supporting drum parts for a traditional Havana-style *rumba guaguanco*.

Figure 6.10. Traditional Havana-style *Rumba Guaguanco*

Vilera and Flores voiced a Havana-style *rumba guaguanco* on the *timbale*-kit and congas during the B section of the CJP's arrangement of "Night in Tunisia" (see fig. 6.11). Vilera plays the *palitos* part in his right hand on the shell of the *timbales*

while his left hand plays the *rumba clave* rhythm on a "jam block." He augments this with a bass drum pattern that further defines the two different sides of *clave*. By playing the bass drum on beat one of the two side and on the *bombo* note (the "and" of beat two) of the three side, Vilera emphasizes the contrasting sides of the *clave* key pattern. Flores creatively combines all three individual conga parts from the traditional *guaguanco* into a composite pattern for one player. This modified composite pattern (see fig 6.11) upholds the distinctive melodic and rhythmic contour of the traditional Havana-style. The rhythmic outline of the supporting drum parts can be clearly heard throughout Flores' busy improvisations, giving this section a characteristic Havana-style *rumba guaguanco* feel.

Rumba Clave
Timbal-Kit
O S O S O S S S B S O S O S O S O S S S B S O S
Congas

Figure 6.11. Havana-style *Rumba Guaguanco*, "Night in Tunisia"

The type of creative stylistic treatment used by the CJP on "Night in Tunisia" and other compositions is indicative of the band's broad knowledge of Afro-centric music and the important key patterns that organize them. This knowledge not only brought authenticity to the CJP's music, but showed a profound respect for the musical traditions from which they borrowed. The CJP's ability to organically

combine various Latin and Caribbean styles within single compositions is at the core of the band's artistry and distinction within the Latin jazz genre.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

History has a way of repeating itself. Within the complex and storied history of Latin jazz, there have been many important artists who moved the genre forward. In 1955, vibraphonist Cal Tjader released *Mambo With Tjader,* which was recorded by Cal Tjader's Modern Mambo Quintet. Tjader's quintet was the first American jazz group to play almost exclusively Latin jazz.[85] With the formation of this group, Tjader created a new subgenre of Latin jazz built around the quintet of vibraphone, piano, bass and two percussionists. Forty years later, through his work with the CJP, vibraphonist Dave Samuels essentially modernized the tradition Tjader began. Samuels' initiative to form the CJP with co-leaders Andy Narell and Paquito D'Rivera, plus his determination to keep the concept fresh and innovative through several shifts in personnel was quite remarkable. With each incarnation of the CJP, Samuels ensured that the band maintained an authenticity and integrity that can only be achieved through a deep understanding and reverence for the musical traditions being merged.

For almost two decades the CJP creatively fused jazz harmony and improvisation with Caribbean and Latin American rhythms. By exploring innovative instrumentation, form and style, the band evolved with and contributed to the ever-expanding definition of Latin jazz. The band's technical prowess, wealth of

[85] Roberts, *Latin Jazz: The First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today,* 97.

experience in Latin music and incredibly diverse musical character led the group to a style and sound that was new and unique. Most importantly, the CJP exposed the commonalities of all Afro-centric music in the Americas. The band's pan-Latin approach demonstrated to the Latin jazz community that for all the important differences that define each Latin and Caribbean style, they are all united by African roots.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The CJP is such a multifaceted band that there are several opportunities for more research into the group's playing style and historical significance. First, the examination of the CJP personnel that is presented in this document is limited to only the musicians who performed on the nine CJP albums released through the Heads Up International and Concord record labels. Through research, the author found that the touring CJP group was often very different than the studio bands. Latin jazz is a highly improvisatory style of music and only a portion of its character and spontaneity can be realized on a studio recording. An interesting continuation of this project would be to examine the nature of the CJP's live performances.

Furthermore, although Dave Samuels was leader and catalyst throughout the band's output, the contributions of several other musicians deserve much recognition. In particular, the work of Samuels' co-founders Andy Narell and Paquito D'Rivera was extremely significant in establishing the sound and direction of the group. An extended analysis of their contributions to the CJP would be very appropriate because without their efforts the CJP would not have existed.

Finally, the capacity of this document only allowed for a performance analysis of one small aspect of the band's unique playing style. There would be several ways that one could expand on this research. For example, rather than being limited to a drumset and percussion focus, one could broaden the analytical scope and examine the playing style of the entire rhythm section. A second way to expand this research would be to specifically study the CJP's arrangements of jazz standards, which were quite innovative and became a large part of the group's identity. It is the author's hope that the work presented in this document opens the door for a deeper look into the fascinating history and music of the Caribbean Jazz Project.

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APPENDIX A

PHONE INTERVIEW WITH DAVE SAMUELS

Dave Samuels
Narrator

Jesse Willis
Interviewer

January 13, 2015

JW: I'm interested in the challenges you faced as a bandleader transforming such a great group of individual musicians into a group that had one unified voice. Will you speak generally to this topic?

DS: Sure, this was an opportunity to play with a different instrumentation, aside from Cal (Tjader) there really hadn't been anyone out there playing this kind of music. It was much more of an issue of content than to get the people together that wanted to play. I was fortunate to have people that wanted to do it more than once, that were interested in new music and a different way of playing rather than boxing ourselves into the same sound that had gone on for a while. This [music] had other elements to it, everyone had their own voice and it was a real commentary about community. At the time we were just trying to find music that we liked to play together and find gigs where we could work together. That's what sounded right for us.

JW: Along those lines, when you, Paquito and Andy first put the group together for a gig in central park in 1993, you were bringing together instruments and styles of music that were from different areas of the world but all had roots in the African Diaspora, like cousins at a family reunion. Can you explain a little bit about how the first conversations and rehearsals went with the original group as you came up with what you wanted the voice and identity of the group to be?

DS: Paquito, Andy or I, none of us had actually put that particular kind of instrumentation together before. The music was deep. It not only had a different texture to it; but, the combination of all these instruments really made it sound like it was from a different planet. We started with each one of us bringing in one of our own tunes and the rhythm section was there making additions or subtracting things. We worked a few years doing it like that. It was a real opportunity for me; I learned a tremendous amount playing with all those musicians. It was a new sound and everyone was contributing. The format was to keep it alive and give everybody an opportunity to express themselves, not only as a player but also as a writer. It was a

community thing, which was great and I think we made an impact. Then it started to change or morph into other things. For example, I never thought I would be making a record with a big band and yet it made perfect sense and it was the perfect sound.

JW: On the first album, you said you would bring tunes, Paquito would bring tunes and Andy would bring tunes. With this format, how would you incorporate your voice or put your imprint on their tunes? Were there any issues coming up with the arrangements because the unique instrumentation?

DS: We made sure as best we could that it wasn't about any one individual, instead it was about the different cultures, the feel and the tempo; then you overlay all the different sounds of the instruments and you come up with a sound that no one had heard before. It was such a comfortable environment to play in. There's getting up on stage and playing but there's also the other 20 hours of that you have to fill traveling, sitting on an airplane, in a car, telling jokes.

JW: You're right, without the hang, it's hard to have a band that sounds good.

DS: That is absolutely true. It was really a unique group that we put together and we all worked hard when we were out there out on the road. We were identified because of the sound and it kept going until we were pulled in different directions and other paths opened up.

JW: Could you speak a little bit about the rhythm section for the first two albums? How did the group come about?

DS: I had worked with Oscar [Stagnaro], Mark Walker and Dario [Eskanazi]; I met them through Paquito. The material they liked playing already had a real texture to it and when we added the other players, Andy, Luis and myself, it took on a new life. Mark Walker is an amazing, not just drummer, but musician. He's a really incredible musician with great time, really great time. We just had a good combination of people that really enjoyed playing together and it was a killin' band. It was fun to play, fun to hang, fun to learn new stuff and let's not forget the jokes.

JW: Do you feel the second album, *Island Stories*, was an extension of the first album or had the concept of the group changed by this point?

DS: Who was in that band again?

JW: Dario, Oscar, Mark and Pemell Saturnino

DS: After having played with the original band it took some adjusting and we made it a bit smaller unit like a "jazz combo" from another planet. We had, and still do have, a good relationship. You can't buy or fabricate that kind of stuff. When it's working well and its productive, its family.

JW: With the *New Horizons* Album, the personnel completely changed. What led to this change?

DS: I kind of wanted to move more left than right. Who's on that record?

JW: Dave Valentine, Steve Kahn, John Benetiz, Richie Flores, and it was sort of a Cuban *Charanga* instrumentation.

DS: Yes, it was kind of like an unusual Latin band with no piano. Steve [Kahn] really brought an incredible sound and approach to playing. I hadn't played with Valentine much and it was great because he brought his own style and interest. You know, Dave started out as a drummer and his time is so ridiculous. Richie Flores and Robert Villera was the other percussionist, *timbale* player. It was like one big, huge percussion ensemble.

JW: I didn't know that but you can hear it in his playing, it's so rhythmic, it's amazing. The "Maluca" track in particular, and on later albums he's amazing as well. Would you say that the rhythmic style he brought from his experience playing *salsa* music with some of the greats like Tito [Puente] was one of the most important things he brought to the table?

DS: Yes, I would say, the ship went from being a small big band to a becoming more of a dance band when it landed in South America. I had never played in a band with that kind of time and that kind of edge. It was incredibly infectious and powerful. I certainly got to see a portion of the world I had not gotten to see before and learned about the rhythmic origins that were prominent in all the music. Also, these guys were non-stop players, they had a lot of energy, sometimes too much energy but when the music started everything else was secondary.

JW: How did this unique instrumentation affect your compositional style and did it present challenges?

DS: One way to write for this kind of a band was to take the format, not necessarily the instrumentation, and build around that. So, in other words, you are following the standard traditional format [of a jazz group], but adding sound and rhythm that is not indigenous to that music. We were a band that could be playing one style and shift to a completely different kind of style or feel. It, and the fact that we were not a vocal unit, set us apart from what the other bands were doing.

JW: It definitely made you guys unique. Your ability to shift between styles, combine new sounds and new rhythms from different parts of the world was one of the things that got me interested in your music in the first place.

DS: There was a transculturation going on. Where were you born? Where do you come from and do you dance the dance? But when it comes down to it, it's like being on a baseball team. Once you are up to bat, nobody cares where you are from. It's about playing together and community, and when that is happening it is infectious.

Playing the music and dancing the music. Dancing the music means knowing how to move and listen. Where you are from and what you look like is secondary. When you are on the bandstand playing with people that are serious about playing, all that is important is what you sound like. Everything else, from my standpoint is secondary. When it feels good, everything is good. It was a really interesting time with a bunch of spectacular musicians, from different backgrounds that, at first, I knew nothing about. Also, they hadn't played with a vibe player, so they were curious how that was going to work as well. Nobody knew including myself, we just did it and made it sound like it fit together.

JW: Are you saying you also got to work on your dancing chops? [Laughter]

DS: I made it clear that my feet dance but anything above my ankles does not move. Funny story, we were playing a festival in the Caribbean. Steve Kahn was with this woman from the island. She had a very famous TV show, I can't remember the name of the show, but she was big, a huge success in her country. She was as sweet as can be and very nice. We are at this festival and we are being interviewed after our set. They were asking the standard questions. Steve made an arrangement for her to meet us in the area where we were having our interview. She showed up very quietly and as soon as one person saw her, everyone immediately turned and no one talked to us any more. They all went scrambling to her because she was so popular. She felt terrible that they all wanted to interview her, instead of her boyfriend, and she had nothing to do with it. We were howling because to everyone else we disappeared instantaneously. It was wild. [Laughter]

JW: I'm sure they were all star-struck.

DS: Oh yeah, when we hung out with her, you couldn't walk down the street without someone walking over and asking for an autograph.

JW: I may have misheard but did you say that you did the *New Horizons* recording in South America?

DS: I'll have to look [shuffling papers], those were done in New York.

JW: Leading to the next album, *Paraiso*, you had all three of you guys [Dave Valentine, Steve Kahn, Dave Samuels] back as the front men but you had some pretty big changes in the rhythm section. This was Ruben Rodriguez and Dafnis Prieto's first album with you guys. You also had Luisito Quintero and Richie Flores on percussion. How did the changes in the rhythm section change the sound and feel of the band?

DS: Yes Dafnis, I met him when he had just come over from Cuba. Being a drummer myself, I was intrigued because he played some really interesting music. He would bring in his music, that was not easy to read; but, it didn't make any difference because it sounded so new and different. He did another record that Alain Mallet played on, it was also really great. He [Dafnis] was a really great drummer and he

wrote great tunes. I spoke with him a couple months ago; he was doing a lot of writing and a little bit of playing. He was a strong personality. The other guy that was great to play with was Alan Mallet.

JW: He played organ and piano, correct?

DS: Yes, he was an excellent musician. I did a couple records with him. That's another name you want to remember.

JW: On *Paraiso*, you also added Ray Vega on flugelhorn and Conrad Herwig on trombone. What did the addition of these players do to the record? Did you have this in mind going into it?

DS: Yes, Ray and Conrad, it was a fantastic group. These guys walk in and play the crap out of the music. All you have to do is say hello. They had a focus on style, intent and feel. It was an environment for people who liked improvising, taking a foundation and on that foundation coming up with different kind of time-feels and chordal developments so that it sounded like something completely different.

JW: As you went into the Grammy winning album *The Gathering*, you took the "heat" up several notches. Was that your intent, and would you say that it was the band's most advanced explorations into Afro-Cuban jazz?

DS: Yes, that would definitely be one way of describing it. It was a different sound, different quality and different instrumentation, and it seemed like a logical thing to do.

JW: Dafnis and Ruben were back, Richie was still there and Roberto Quintero was with you guys. It seemed like to me that you guys got more and more focused on the Afro-Cuban element as opposed to the first few albums where you explored other Latin styles like *calypsos* and *samba*s. Was that your goal?

DS: I think yes; but, what was most interesting was the other players. I always wanted to find people that were curious, had really great time and wanted to share their voice.

JW: That group in particular was really killin', the rhythmic complexity and intricacy of the arrangements was incredible. It seemed like you guys were really pushing yourselves on that album. Would you say that it was the musicians that you were playing with on that album that inspired that lift?

DS: Yes, I think what happened was that by putting all those elements together, we came out with something completely different. We went out on tour for a little bit and then we came back and recorded. It really helped us capture that special kind of group spirit, where we were all connected with each other. You listen back to it and it's exciting to listen to and grow from. For me, these guys were really inspiring

people and everybody wanted to go for a similar kind of progression. Their open-mindedness says a lot about all of them.

JW: This was also the first time you had piano back in the group in several albums, was that decision based on the Afro-Cuban direction you wanted go?

DS: Dario was someone I had worked with a lot, a close friend. I knew that he would be a positive force in this. The personality of the player is the most helpful for me.

JW: You've mentioned the time element several times. Something I've always admired about your playing is your sense of rhythmic phrasing. How did working with musicians like these affect your sense of phrasing and time?

DS: It absolutely affected it. I was learning from them and was constantly influenced by them. From their standpoint, they got an opportunity to not just play *Songo* for six weeks. They got an opportunity to stretch themselves is a way they hadn't done before. Even for the guys playing in really good Latin bands, there were always certain spots that they didn't cover that really put them out there. It was really great music and it became much more of a dance music than what I was originally thinking about. We wanted the dance to be part of the music. You could superimpose the dance on top of all sorts of time feels. Dafnis and Alan had serious time and it's great to surround yourself with that type of musician so that you can continue to learn from them.

JW: With *Birds of a Feather*, you had a lot of the same guys back. It carried over the boldness and creativity from the previous album. Do you feel it was a continuation of *The Gathering* and how did the addition of musicians like Randy Brecker contribute to the sound of the album?

DS: I would have to think about that for a while.

JW: I completely understand.

DS: At that time, there were lots of great musicians and people that were interested in improvising. For me, it has changed a lot, I hear stuff out there that is really fantastic and some stuff that is not so fantastic but that's the way music always is.

JW: One thing that interested me about CJP is the way you guys creatively arranged standards of the jazz world. Your arrangements of "Caravan," "Bemsha Swing," "Stolen Moments," "Night in Tunisia" immediately come to mind. Will you speak to how you went about re-conceiving and arranging these tunes in different ways while maintaining the integrity of the original tunes?

DS: I was lucky to play with really good percussionists and I don't just mean hand percussionists, also pianists. It was a way to take something and turn it upside down. Whether we were changing the time signature or not, ultimately we wanted

to make it sound like it was still dance music. We wanted to make it not about how many notes you play but how you play the notes so that it if it is in a different time signature, it still has a smooth, floating character. There were other bands that were doing it around the same time but we seemed to find a particular way of playing. It was a challenge but also very comforting. We would be playing somewhere and it would be fun to get the musicians in the audience counting and moving their feet. When we were doing it, it was a weird feeling but when you open up the book and see what it looks like and we would say, "that's all it is." When coming up with the arrangements, you start listening and you think about "how much of this" do I need to make it sound like the original. Maybe there's another part that needs to happen to solidify where the downbeat is, but you have to dig to find it. Once you get used to digging it opens up to you and once it opens up to you, you can play these "unusual time signatures." You realize that it is not as hard or unintelligible as you thought, and you find that it fits in its own way. It takes place not on the wings but in the center. Everybody comes up with their own way of feeling the time. The only thing that matters is that it sounds good, not how you are counting it. There were some players that I was fortunate enough to play with that just had the time and the feel down pat. Dafnis [Prieto] and Alain Mallet, those two guys made some incredible music.

JW: The live album, *Here and Now,* seemed to be a culmination of the previous three records: *Paraiso, The Gathering* and *Birds of a Feather*. You included selections from these albums and it has a very similar feel. The band that played with you on this album included Diego Urcola, Oscar Stagnaro, Mark Walker, and Robert Quintero. You had played with so many fantastic musicians on the previous three records, how did decide who to have participate on the album?

DS: That was a band that we had toured a lot with. I listen back to it and I can't believe how much energy it had. We were playing at these incredible tempos. I listen to it now and I don't know if I can play that long anymore. Also, the trick was to find "1", if you can't find "1" keep on looking. Robert [Quintero) was a fantastic hand percussionist, he had so much energy and he could follow the odd time signatures ("Night in Tunisia" in 7) and make them sound smooth and easy. It was a really nice band.

JW: The next album, *Mosaics*, reminds me of the CJP's first two records because it is more stylistically diverse. Whereas the previous few albums like The Gathering and Paraiso had extensively explored Afro-Cuban jazz, this album included a broad palette of Caribbean and South American styles much like *The Caribbean Jazz Project* and *Island Stories*. To me, it felt like the band had come full circle. Many of the original members of the band, including Paquito [D'rivera] and Andy [Narell], were back in the group along with Alain [Mallet] and Dafnis [Prieto] as well as others from the more recent incarnations of the band. Was the intent with this album to bring the CJP full circle?

DS: I think it was and I remember that it was not easy to manage all the schedules and bring all these guys together. I would need to look back at my notes about the album to see specifically what some of my ideas about the album were but I don't have them in front of me.

JW: That's ok, no problem. It's just really interesting aspect of that album to me. when I listen to that album, I hear bits and pieces of several of the other previous albums.

DS: Right, we were doing so many different things, but at that point we had our "standards," like "Night in Tunisia." It had become, not an opening number, but a tune that we played a lot and that we were known for. We always had fun with it, the more we played it, the more we disguised it and the more we disguised it, the more we looked for disguise. We had many tunes like this. In general, there was a growth in the music from the time we started out up to that point.

JW: This was the first time in 13 years that Andy [Narell] and Paquito [D'Rivera] had recorded with the group. Songs like "Portraits of Cuba," "Wazo Dazil," and "Dusk," are particularly reminiscent of the first two albums. What was it like getting to record with them again after nearly a decade and a half?

DS: I remember that it was a fairly short recording process because were all so busy. But it was great to reminisce with them. Andy showed up with his pans and Paquito showed up with his jokes and had us all rolling on the floor laughing before we played. It felt like old times.

JW: The following album, *Afro Bop Alliance,* was quite a departure from your previous projects, most obviously in instrumentation. You mentioned that you had never recorded with a big band before, what inspired you to put together this project?

DS: Joe McCarthy, the drummer, was in the military and was running this band, the Afro-Bop Alliance. I had done some smaller gigs with him in the Washington area and and I asked one of the trombonists in the band, Dan Drew, to re-arrange some of the CJP tunes for a big band. He was very creative with the songs I gave him and his orchestrations were great. Because the arrangements were so good, Joe and I thought, we should try and record these, so we decided to make a record together. I had played in big bands when I was a drummer in high school but I hadn't played with one in years. I was excited to take this opportunity and record an album with a big band and it really popped.

JW: You are absolutely right; the album packs a huge punch from the first note of "Rendezvous." It has so much energy and it is a different sound from previous albums largely because of the instrumentation. It really comes out and smacks you in the face.

DS: Yes, it does and it was a completely different experience for me recording with a big band and I think it also creates a different experience for the listener as well, even though the tunes were tunes we had already recorded with the small group. Also, Joe [McCarthy] is not just a great musician but has the ability to organize as well. It was not an easy task getting all those musicians together and he did a great job.

JW: You mentioned Dan Drew who arranged some tunes, did he do all of the arrangements?

DS: They had a couple guys including Dan, that would take my originals and re-arrange them for the new instrumentation

JW: So you gave them a track list?

DS: Yeah, they took them, worked on them and we saw what worked and what didn't. There was a time where we had about half the album done and we had to wait for the other half for a number of reasons, then we got back together and finished it off. It was a real honor to get nominated for a Grammy and also to win. It was a great honor to be up there with everybody. For me, it was really different and exciting to go around and play with a band that big. I learned so much.

JW: How was the recording process different with this album than the previous albums?

DS: We did it in pieces and on some of the tunes they would send me the arrangements that they had put together and I would record my parts from my room at home. We would throw out ideas to each other and work around everybody's schedules. It took a little bit of time that way but it came out and it sounded like nothing else.

JW: Are there any future plans for CJP?

DS: Well, one never knows.

JW: As you look back over the two decades and nine albums that you recorded, what is it that defines the Caribbean Jazz Project and what do you hope listeners take away from your music?

DS: My answer is not necessarily in order of importance but from the inside out. First, it gave me an opportunity as a vibes player and a marimba player to bring these instruments that rarely get exposure to a new audience. I also wanted to show young people who are in school that may say things like, "I can't do that, I don't know how to do that or I can't play that style of music," that you can. The instrument is capable of doing more and playing more styles of music. I hope that it gives people the idea that they can work in the same kind of arena that I did and that these instruments are not just to be played in a dark room by certain people, it is

meant for a wider audience and is accessible. Also, in general, no matter what instrument you choose to play but especially percussionists, I hope our music shows that the best way you can play that instrument is to find out how music works. You must find out how it is written, how it is played and how it is arranged. For example, some people think that being a drummer means you are stuck in the kitchen, but that just is not true. You want to take advantage of each situation so that you can learn more about the process of how music is made. Being a drummer doesn't mean that you can't write music, it doesn't mean that you can't do what you may have in your head. That's another important point.

JW: I can't thank you enough for taking the time to speak with me and for your commitment to this wonderful group. I hope we can stay in touch and have further conversations.

DS: Thanks, I guess I'll get a chance to meet you in a month or so right?

JW: Yes, I am going to try to make it out to Bloomington to see you and Steve when you are there in February. If I can't, I hope to meet with you and speak to you again in the near future.

DS: Great, me too.

JW: Ok, have a great day

DS: You too, Bye.

JW: Bye.

APPENDIX B

PHONE INTERVIEW WITH MARK WALKER

Mark Walker
Narrator

Jesse Willis
Interviewer

February 29, 2016

JW: How did you first get involved with the Caribbean Jazz Project (CJP)?

MW: I played with Paquito [D'Rivera] and his band from 1989 to 1992; then in 1992, I started playing with the Lyle Mays Quartet. I played with that band from 1992 to 1994. While I was touring with Lyle, Dave Samuels heard me play, when we were in Connecticut. At that time, I was getting ready to move to New York and he wanted to use me on some projects. In the summer of 94, I started working with Paquito again, this time with the big band. He knew I was moving to New York and he began calling for some other gigs as well. Shortly after that we got together and started playing with what was basically the CJP; Dave, Paquito, Andy Narell on steel pan, Oscar Stagnaro on bass and Dario Eskanazi on piano. On the live gigs there were no percussionists except Andy who occasionally played some additional percussion, so it was a lot different on the record than it was live because we didn't have percussion.

JW: Dave mentioned how the idea first came together for a concert in Central Park, were you involved in this?

MW: No, that was a whole different rhythm section. I believe that Robby Gonzalez and Ed Uribe had been used on some gigs before me. I guess maybe he was playing a bit too aggressively for their taste, or at least Andy's taste. I actually had to adjust my playing quite a bit when playing with Andy Narell. I had to learn how to play intensely and a lower volume, so it was a good experience for me.

JW: What led to you guys to decide to take the group into the studio?

MW: The group was led by Dave and Andy and Paquito. They had a hook up with Dave Love from Heads Up International Record Company. He wanted to record us, so we got some tunes together and had a session at the Carriage House in Connecticut. We had a special guest percussionist on the recording, Luis Conte,

which was great. Luis is an Afro-Cuban percussionist, but he is also very well versed in many other world rhythms. It was so easy to play with him and he was a great guy to work with as well. We got the record done in a couple days and it turned out really well.

JW: At that time, were there any other groups in Latin jazz that were exploring such a diversity of styles? Did you feel that you were doing something different with this group?

MW: It was definitely one of the first groups to play a lot of different rhythms in a jazz context, authentically. The only other group at the time that was doing something similar was Paquito's group but because we had Andy, that added another dimension that no one else had. The Caribbean element from Trinidad and the French Caribbean, that was more present, and wasn't in Paquito's band's repertoire. That was the new thing. Of course we had lots of Cuban and Brazilian rhythms with Paquito.

JW: What was the arranging/composition and rehearsal process like when you first started, being that you were all from different backgrounds?

MW: Whoever wrote the tune had a pretty good idea of what it would be rhythmically but, especially in the case of Dave, he was open to suggestions. Dave was into the rhythms but wrote what could be considered more of a hybrid which was good in a way, because it was left to our interpretation. Oscar, being from Peru, was very important in that band because he knew so many of the South American rhythms. He turned me on to a lot of rhythms in that band. Paquito once said that the CJP was like a little music school. Dario was from Argentina and knew a lot of the Brazilian rhythms really well and he also knew the Cuban stuff. It was nice to have that combination of people because we could definitely go full on Cuban no problem and then we could go to Brazil. We could do it all authentically.

JW: That's what I love about the band. You guys were a musical chameleon that understood each style and what made the rhythms authentic.

MW: Yeah, but at the same time, Dave wrote some tunes that were almost fusion tunes so we could go into that mode as well. On the second record we were fortunate to have Pernell Saturnino from Curacao. He was experienced in just about every kind of rhythm there is, he was a great addition.

JW: Would you say that was the main difference between the first and second album?

MW: Yes, but also when we recorded the first record it was really early on. By the second album we had been working together for a while and we had that experience with each other. We really knew how to function as a band.

JW: The CJP had a unique way of reinventing jazz standards. You guys experimented with both rhythm and time signature. What was this process like?

MW: The time signatures were set in the arrangement but we did experiment with the style. For example, with "Night in Tunisia" we might not play Afro-Cuban and then we would swing on the bridge. We might go into a completely different rhythm like a halftime cha-cha feel or something completely different. If someone led us into something, sometimes Paquito or I would lead it by our phrasing, we would just go into it and have fun with it. We always left it open to improvisation.

JW: As the drumset player, how was your role different playing with this band than with other bands you have worked with?

MW: It was similar to Paquito's band because we were playing a lot of the same rhythms. It was a challenge playing the live shows because we typically didn't have a percussionist due to budget. On gigs, I would try to figure out ways of playing each rhythm to make it sound like more than one player. Then when it came time to play with a percussion again, I had to leave the space that needed to be left for the percussionist. That was a challenge for me.

JW: I have come to realize that the commonalities between different Afro-centric styles of music are just as important as the differences. I have noticed that you explored this idea with your composition "Island Hopping," will you speak to how these commonalities influence your playing?

MW: Its like different kinds of food to me. There is Cuban rice and beans, but rice and beans is in pretty much every Latin American country. There are different ways of preparing it with different spices and ingredients. The same thing with the rhythms, there's a different swing in Brazilian *samba* than there is in Cuban comparsa for example. My thing is that I always try to really listen intently to what the music felt like and to absorb that and try to generate it on the drumset. I know I'll never play exactly like a Brazilian but I can get the feel. Its really a lot like cooking, but you are cooking the music.

JW: How do you as educator, approach teaching musicianship to drumset players?

MW: First you must make people dance, that's 90% of it. If the music is really grooving people it will make people feel good and want to move. For different styles, you also have to understand balance, what elements need to be prominent and what is the most important element of the rhythm. Another one is to play the composition. If you are playing Monk, "Bemsha Swing" for example, there's a certain way to play swing with Monk, but if you are playing it in a Latin style that is different territory but you still have to reflect the vibe of the composer in your playing. For example, Astor Piazzola, when we play tango, we have to reflect him. His vibe was

very dark, if you play it too light it won't sound right. Also, simplify and be clear. Leaving more space almost always sounds bigger and better, simple and grooving is always better than too busy. Also, really listen, not just to the other players but to the style, music and great artists in that style. Hear the solos as composition and anticipate where the phrases are going. Understand what they are doing, understand what each member of the band is doing. If drummers know that, then they know the music. I can tell drummers who know *samba* in one beat. If they play a pickup! If they play a pickup then I know they must know *samba*, if they don't, it must be an arrangement or they don't know the style. Support your fellow musicians and pay attention when accompanying. I was listening to Elvin Jones last night and on a lot of it he was just playing basic time, he would go two or three minutes without playing a fill and it was clear he was really listening. Attitude, when you are inspired by any style, remember it and try to recreate it on the band stand. You can't think about yourself, you have to think about the music and that's it. You have to play it like its your last day on earth.

JW: What would you say you feel is most important for drumset players and percussionists to take away from the CJP?

MW: Know the basic patterns, where they come from and how they support the music. Also, know why they work together. Understand all the parts not just the drum parts. For example, why is a *montuno* being played or why are the dynamics the way they are? Also, understand that it is a jazz gig, its not a traditional Latin gig. That's a big part of it, because we are not playing tunes that are structured like traditional Latin tunes, we are playing jazz compositions. A lot of jazz musicians have sort of a hybrid Latin approach and play something that is a hybrid between *samba* and Afro-Cuban. That's ok if it sounds good but there's more to than just that and I think the hipper musicians are really into understanding and incorporating authentic styles.

JW: What would you say is the most important contribution that CJP made to Latin jazz?

MW: I think it was what probably kept it from being more popular in a way, and that is the variety and the variety of rhythms. If you want to get a Grammy or have a hit record, you kind of have to play pretty much all the same stuff, which puts you in more of a typical bag, which that tends to be more popular, but that's not what we do. We do our thing, we like to mix it up and play all these different styles. Paquito's latest record which won a Grammy is a good example of this. It won but it was hard to categorize, it was classical, jazz, Latin and it was a lot of different Latin. The awarding bodies are not set up to handle that type of music and versatile artists like Paquito and the CJP.

JW: That's a good point, its seems like that the 2002 record, *The Gathering*, was an example of this. That record was much more straight ahead Afro-Cuban jazz.

MW: After Paquito and Andy left, Dave secured the rights to the name and began playing as the CJP, but it was really a new band. It didn't have as much versatility as the original group. They were great but they were much more of a straight ahead Afro-Cuban jazz band.

JW: Exactly, the different phases of the band was one of the things that really drew me to this project. It also seems like after this middle period and with the *Mosaics* album, it is more diverse again, it kind of came full circle.

MW: Yeah, that was the one with Andy, Dave and Paquito again, right?

JW: Yes

MW: Yeah, because when combine those guys you get all that versatility. There's the Caribbean influence and Paquito and then the great pianist on that record Alon Yavnai.

JW: Well, that's all the questions I have, I really appreciate your time

MW: Ok, great. It was nice speaking with you.

JW: Yes, it was nice speaking with you as well.

APPENDIX C

DRUMSET NOTATION KEY AND CONGA NOTATION KEY

Drumset

Bass Drum | Hi-Hat Foot | Snare Drum | Rim Shot | Jam block | Ride Cym | Ride Bell | Cowbell Mouth | Cowbell Neck | Hi-Hat Closed | Hi-Hat Open | Timbale Shell

Conga Strokes

H | T | O | M | S | B | tc

Heel Stroke | Toe Stroke | Open Stroke | Mute Stroke | Slap Stroke | Bass Stroke | Touch Stroke