



PRESS RELEASE
Miguel 'Angá' Díaz
'Echu Mingua' (WCD071)



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With his explosive soloing and inventive five conga patterns, Cuban musician Miguel 'Angá' Díaz is one of the world's great *congueros*. 'Echu Mingua', his debut album as a bandleader, is an innovative set. Angá sees this project as representing his journey in music, and what a journey it's been – from learning at the feet of traditional rumba masters in his rural village, to joining the foremost experimental band in Cuba Irakere, his sojourns with innovative US jazz musicians Steve Coleman & Roy Hargrove, then back to his roots with the Afro-Cuban All Stars, Rubén González, and opening doors with the great Cuban bassist Cachaíto López.

The album features an extraordinary range of styles including Angá's unique and experimental take on classics of Cuban and Jazz repertoire, original African, DJ, contemporary Argentine, and improvised music. He has fused these elements the 'Cuban way' into an organic whole that has been referred to as Rumbadelica, making 'Echu Mingua' a unique sounding record that only Angá could have made. As a percussionist, Angá's goal is take the congas beyond the confines of its traditional role as an accompanying rhythmic instrument and explore its harmonic and melodic possibilities, which he does whilst retaining a humour that shines throughout the recording. Although technically dazzling, 'Echu Mingua' is deeply fused with Angá's spiritual beliefs. Drawing influence from the Cuban Yoruba religion, he likens the album to a musical religious service.

Excluding Angá the trio of musicians at the core of this project are Baba Sissoko, DJ Dee Nasty, and of course Cachaíto. The African influence on the album comes from Sissoko, a singer, n'goni player and percussionist from Mali, who has worked with artists as diverse as the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Sting, and Toumani Diabate. Giving the album a more cutting edge, contemporary flavour, is pioneering French DJ Dee Nasty; emerging from the 1980s underground hip-hop scene, and continuing to this day with his various recordings and hugely influential Radio Nova show, Nasty is the acknowledged king of French hip-

hop. Orlando 'Cachaíto' López is Angá's favourite bass player. The pair collaborated closely on the genre breaking 'Cachaíto' album in 2001, and Angá sees his album as a development of the work that they began on that record.

Another key collaborator, who features on several tracks, is flautist Magic Malik. Malik's pursuit of new experiences mirrors that of Angá, and has lead him to appear on albums by the likes of Saint Germain and Oumou Sangare. 'Echu Mingua' sees Angá reunited with the legendary Cuban supergroup Irakere, with whom he played for many years. The four featured pianists on this album are among the greats of Cuban music; Latin jazz legend and Irakere founder Chucho Valdés, Ibrahim Ferrer's critically acclaimed young pianist Roberto Fonseca, David Alfaro of Afro-Cuban All Stars fame, and the late Rubén González on his final recording.

'Echu Mingua' is a combination of spontaneously improvised tracks such as the hip-hop influenced Freeform, the stripped down trio of Angá, Cachaíto and Malik on Dracula Simon, and lavishly arranged tracks like the John Coltrane classic 'A Love Supreme' with its lush strings and *bata* drums; strings are also used on their interpretation of Thelonious Monk's 'Round Midnight', in which Angá uses a unique 7 conga set-up. Contrasting styles are prevalent throughout the album, from the traditional African arrangements on 'Tumé Tumé', to the Latin jazz classic 'Gandinga Mondongo Sandunga', and the rousing 'Cuban Carnaval' with its blistering horns from Irakere, bringing 'Echu Mingua' to its climactic peak.

Angá Díaz is a musician constantly striving to discover new sounds and ideas, with an ever broadening musical palette he continues to defy categorization.