



(LYRCD 7417)

## **CHOCOLATE**

### **PERU'S MASTER PERCUSSIONIST**

(Choco-lah-tay)

#### TRACKS

1. Uno Nino En Tiempo - 3:38
2. Conga Forte, Rico Cajon - 14:26
3. Ani-Ani Manola - 15:07
4. Uno Tych - 5:19

#### THE MUSIC

African slaves were brought over to the Spanish colony of Peru in the 16th century, to work the gold and silver mines of the high Andes. However, their physique was not suited to the high altitude and they died by the hundreds. Their Spanish or Criollo (born in Peru of Spanish decent) masters sent them down to work in the milder climate of the desert coast. There they labored in the large haciendas (private farms).

It was in their small adobe huts, on the packed dirt floors of the courtyards overrun with animals and in the fields of cotton and sugar cane that the Afro-Peruvian music, song and dance were born. They played in the fields, and their songs are of warning to beware of the white devils, talk of the cruelty of slave masters, of freedom, as well as the joys of their everyday life and loves.

This tradition is still alive along the coast of Peru, especially in a small valley a few hundred miles south of Lima, named Cincha, which is predominantly populated by blacks. It is also part of black culture in Lima, in the southern suburb of El Carmen.

This music and dance isn't reserved for performers, but part of a continuing conversation for weddings, baptisms, funerals and other celebrations, or whenever a few of them get together in the evenings to jam, on the streets or in their living rooms.

The religious origin of this music is the African-derived religion, Santaria, the ritual form of this music in the Caribbean as well. The percussionist is seen as a sort of shaman who calls or evokes the spirits, he is a mediator between heaven and earth since the spirits are expressed through his rhythms.

The cajon is a wooden box-drum, which the player sits on to play. It is thought to have originated in Peru (although the Cubans also claim it as their own). The cajon has many voices. The cajonero makes it talk. Usually when Afro-Peruvians get together to play there is someone rattling the "quijada de burro" which is a donkey's jaw, and nowadays, the guitar is also often incorporated, but this is more a criollo addition.

These instruments reflect the poor origin of the music; a music for which all that was needed was your body and the nearest objects from which to make sounds. Another extremely important element is the Zapateo; a peculiar form of tap-dancing that is done with bare feet. Everybody is involved in this music, which builds up throughout the evening into an intense competition by daybreak, each trying to outdo the others with complex and subtle rhythms. It becomes a conversation between the dancers and the cajon as they work themselves into a late night ecstasy.

There are also group dances with male and female players in bare feet with colorful costumes, the women in very short skirts, the men in knee length pants and open cotton shirts. For example, the Alcatraz is a courtship dance where male and female dancers cavort rhythmically with a small piece of cotton attached over their buttocks which each in turn tries to set fire to with a candle as they dance. Other dances include the slow and sensuous Toro mata, the Zamacueca with its rhythmical pattern of waving scarves, the languorous lando and the gay festejo.

Chocolate is the most faithful representative of the cajon and this tradition of ritual drumming which, as very few people in Peru have maintained and kept alive in its purest form. He was one of the original founders of the group PERU NEGRO that was the first troupe of Afro-Peruvian singers, dancers and musicians, to exhibit their tradition outside of Peru. It was composed of a talented group of young black dancers and musicians who came together in an effort to preserve and refine their heritage. Chocolate has also performed around the world with another folkloric dance group called MAKALACHE, he was the drummer of the touring group of the renowned Peruvian diva of singing and song writing, Chabuca Granda. He is also a member of a new group by the name of Peru Jazz, which attempts to marry Afro-Peruvian and indigenous music in a contemporary jazz idiom.

Patricia Llosa

## CHOCOLATE

Chocolate was born Julio Algendones in 1934 in Peru. He grew up in a community of poor Black farm workers and was carried by his mother as she picked cotton. When he was older and had begun to develop his considerable musical talents, he earned enough money to survive by performing in bars and clubs in Lima. Though surrounded by a colorful and violent life in the streets of Lima's barrios, Chocolate took hold of his music and his deeply religious path of Makumba and Santaria. He began to find a power in his soul that took form in his music. This

reality of Chocolate's past is what produces the real depth of his sound today.

Chocolate begins this masterwork of percussion with sophistication and simplicity. This piece is called "Uno Nino en Tiempo." Then "Conga Forte, Rico Cajon" begins to demonstrate the magnitude of Chocolate's rhythmic abilities. Perhaps for the more sophisticated drum audience, this piece is one of the most wonderful journeys of timing and humor in percussion ever recorded. The cajon has become a trademark of Chocolate's music. The congas are interlaced here with the rich cajon sound in an elaborate rhythmic odyssey.

"Ani-Ani Manola" reflects chocolate's African ancestry and his deep instinct for ceremony and celebration. His many followers in Peru gather in a powerful musical ritual, which weaves Chocolate's magic into a unique tapestry of sound that is characteristic of the Afro-Peruvian genre. To complete this portion, "Uno Tych" is a dramatic and pyrotechnic finale in which Chocolate is assisted by members of his revolutionary musical group, "Peru Jazz."

#### CREDITS

Notes by J. Blue Sheppard (edited by Nick Fritsch)

J Blue Sheppard began collecting music in Peru and other countries in 1972. He recorded and produced this work in 1990. (Also see Lyrichord 7264, "Viacocha – Legendary Music of the Andes.")

Produced by J. Blue Sheppard

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