

JUAN DE MARCOS  
AFRO CUBAN  
ALL STARS



## ABSOLUTELY LIVE II (VIVA MEXICO! / LIVE IN MARYLAND)

Six years after his last release, Juan de Marcos, architect of the famous Buena Vista Social Club sessions, comes back with an Afro-Cuban All Stars' new production, *Absolutely Live II*, an eclectic and interactive live album based on excerpts concerts performed at the *Cervantino International Festival in Guanajuato, Mexico, and The Strathmore Center for the Arts in North Bethesda, Maryland, USA*. Dubbed "the Quincy Jones of Cuban Music" by *Down Beat Magazine*, due to his creative approach to different Cuban and international genres. Juan de Marcos work received the inaugural *Womex* award in 1999, and his many albums, including his 1997 debut

recording, *A Toda Cuba le Gusta*, are considered seminal in the new millennium renaissance of Afro-Cuban music. *Viva Mexico!* is the audio portion and features five distinct Cuban genres in eight tracks, ranging from *Afro-Cuban Jazz* on tunes like "Yaimara's Groove," where Havana meets New Orleans, to 1950s-style *Pilón*, and it includes a new version of Ibrahim Ferrer's classic hit "Candela," which first reached international audiences on the original *Buena Vista Social Club* album. Other highlights include Contemporary and Traditional Cuban *Son* (*Barbaridad, Kila, Quique y Chocolate*), *Timba* (*La Mujer del Barbaro*), and introspective tracks like "Camino de Santiago", about the emergence of prostitution in Cuba during the euphemistically called "Special Period in times of Peace." *Viva Mexico!* – an explosive showcase of danceable music – was recorded live, capturing a special moment exactly as it happened. It is the first release of new label, *DM Ahora! Productions*, which pays tribute to both the founding members of Afro-Cuban All Stars (Ruben Gonzalez, Compay Segundo, Manuel Licea, Pio Leyva, Raul Planas, etc.) and Mexico, a nation that proudly supports the Cuban people.

Based on the successful reception of previous concert videos (*Live in Japan, Live in the Hague, Salon of Dreams*), *Absolutely Live II* also offers a brand-new release, *Live in Maryland*, which contains excerpts of a performance at the prestigious Strathmore Center for the Arts in North Bethesda, Maryland. While most of the earlier live productions were large-venue performances, *Live in Maryland* embodies the magic and intimacy of a concert hall setting, and features a warmer, slightly roomier sound. The video features five songs. "Laura en el Paraiso", written by Juan de Marcos in honor of his younger daughter, clarinetist Laura Lydia Gonzalez, is a set of Afro-Cuban jazz which opens full band, with the piano playing the melodic lines. A full binary development leads to a complicated and asymmetric Ostinato, which serves as the foundation for several solos. "On the road again" is a Cha Cha Cha version of the Santa Maria / Lavilliers classic. "Glicería 5:00 AM" is a *Danzón* penned by Juan de Marcos and dedicated to his wife of 38 years, percussionist and band manager Glicería Abreu. "No vamos a la Rumba," is a contemporary Cuban son. Performance ends in a kind of Cuban party with the explosive "Nacho's Pilon," which combines that traditional rhythm with Timba. *This exciting first video release from the new label DM Ahora! Productions, shows the musicianship and energy of Afro-Cuban All Stars in full maturity.*

