Trans-Atlantic Beats:

Common ground in Congolese and Cuban dance music

Dr Sara McGuinness
London College of Music
University of West London
sara.mcguinness@uwl.ac.uk
Kiamfu Kasongo

aka Burkina Faso

aka Mbokalia

Instrumental in development of Congolese popular music

One of the most popular guitarists in DRC

Cuban Son

‘Returned’ to Africa

Popular dance music of Cuba

AUDIO EXAMPLE: Dame un Besito  - Arsenio Rodriguez 1948

AUDIO EXAMPLE: No Soy el Mismo de Ayer - Adalberto Alvarez 2010
Cuban Music ‘goes back’ to Africa

1933 - GV series produced primarily for West African market

Found popularity in the two Congos

In the 50s and 60s Congolese bands required to play Cuban hits as part of their repertoire

Adopted Spanish sounding names

Line-up modelled on Cuban bands with Horn section and percussion

Well nobody understood Spanish. Nevertheless, we took a dictionary and searched for words that would sound good and we used them regardless of their true meaning.

(Franco, Interview with wa Mukuna, 17 March 1983)

Parafifi - Grand Kalle and African Jazz 1957

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CX4MzK4D8dM
Congolese music modernises

1970s-90s

Zaiko Langa Langa
Sandra Lina 1986

4th Generation early 1990s-

Wenge Musica
Koko Madimba 1996

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CX4MzK4D8dM
Rivalries in Congolese music

The School/Village divide

A theme that has run through the history of Congolese popular music

Schooled musicians look down on ‘village musicians’

While ‘village’ musicians are proud of their status

Salsa and jazz considered domain of schooled musicians

Burkina Faso firmly situated in the ‘village’

Collaboration with artists who are not seated in taught notion of Cuban music

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CX4MzK4D8dM
Common Factors in Contemporary Son/Salsa and Congolese Rumba

Structure
Timeline
Musical Organisation and creation of groove
Dynamics
STRUCTURE OF SON

Largo (Verse) Section

Introduction
Verse
Instrumental Interlude
Verse
Link into the Montuno section

Montuno Section

Short repeated chord progression
Call and response vocals with lead improvisation
Change in dynamic, Bongo player changes to Cowbell (Campana)
Instrumental solos
Horn Mambos

AUDIO EXAMPLE: El Son No Puede Fallar, Grupo Sierra Maestra 2005
STRUCTURE OF RUMBA

Rumba Section

- Instrumental Introduction
- Verse
- Instrumental Interlude
- Verse with changed final cadence

Refrain Section

- Short repeated chord progression
- Harmony chorus’ with lead vocal improvisations

Seben

- 4 Bar repeated major chord progression
- Extended instrumental solos
- Atalaku - half rapped/half sung vocals
- Choreographed dance moves

**AUDIO EXAMPLE:** Procés Mambika- Wenge Musica 1998
Comparison of Son/Rumba structures

**Son**

- **Largo**
  - Set length
  - Narration
  - Relatively gentle groove

- **Montuno**
  - Livelier groove
  - ‘Dancing part.’
  - Groove created by layers of interlocking ostinatos.
  - Structure allows for open sections.
  - Interaction between musicians, dancers and audience.
  - By far the longest section.
  - Significantly longer in performance than recorded

**Rumba**

- **Refrain**
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Comparison of 3:2 Son Clave and Cavacha Snare

Cavacha snare pattern

\[ \text{Snare} \]

\[ j = 118-120 \]
Dynamics

Open and improvised structure

Interaction between musicians and audience

Emphasis on dance

Montuno

Call and response chorus
and lead voice/instrument
Vocal improvisation
Instrumental solos
Horn Mambos/ Breakdowns

Seben

Guitar- lead sections
Interspersed with drum rolls
Call and response - Atalaku, dancers and drummer
Synth Lines/ breakdowns

AUDIO EXAMPLE: Koko Madimba- Wenge Musica 1996
AUDIO EXAMPLE: Mi Linda Habanera - Adalberto Alvarez 2005
Conclusion

Significant similarities between Congolese and Cuban music

Two Part Structure

Shared Timeline

Rhythm created through layers of interlocking ostinatos

Open structure allows for interaction with audience

“I found animation and the two part song structure the most striking thing about Congolese popular dance music”

“it rarely occurs to them that this special position might be due in part to the music’s unique two part song structure”

Dr Sara McGuinness
London College of Music
University of West London
sara.mcguinness@uwl.ac.uk

Obrigada
### COMPARISON OF FOURTH GENERATION CONGOLESE RUMBA AND CUBAN SON FORMATS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONGOLESE RUMBA (4th Generation)</th>
<th>SON MONTUNO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Instrumental Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>A Instrumental Introduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B Verse</strong></td>
<td><strong>B Verse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C Instrumental Interlude</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Solfeggge&quot; usually a short lead guitar line</td>
<td>Usually a horn line or piano/tres figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B' Verse with changed final cadence</strong></td>
<td><strong>B' Verse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D Refrain with call and response vocals</strong></td>
<td><strong>D Link into the Montuno section</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E Seben</strong></td>
<td><strong>E Montuno</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline = Cavacha</td>
<td>Timeline = Clave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended lead guitar solos, layered guitar and keyboard parts. Key and chord progression changes and changing guitar lines all separated by rolls, termed &quot;passage&quot; on the drums.</td>
<td>Call and response lead vocal or instrumental and chorus. Typically the first few will be instrumental and then the lead singer will enter. This entry is accompanied by the bongo player changing to play cowbell (Campana).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choreographed dance moves in response to cries of the 'Atalaku', punctuated by the drummer.</td>
<td>Extended instrumental solos and horn mambos (repeated interlocking horn lines which build up) often accompanied by percussion breaks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open but highly formalised structure allowing interaction between musicians and audience</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bar repeated chord progression. Almost always in the major key, comprising the I, IV and V chords</td>
<td>Short repeated chord progression, may be major or minor, usually on I, IV and V chords.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamics - created by changes in instrumentation such as shift from guitar to keyboard, lead guitar dropping out, usually in response to atalaku and marked by 'passage' on the drums.</td>
<td>Dynamics - created by instruments dropping out, change in intensity and register played, usually marked by breaks on percussion.</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th><strong>F Coda</strong></th>
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<td>Break to end, signalled by Atalaku</td>
<td></td>
<td>May be horn figure or return to intro.</td>
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</table>
Structure

In both musical styles emphasis on the “dancing part” of the music

Son

Montuno

Congoles Rumba

Seben

Both Seben and Montuno sections feature a short repeated chord progression and open and improvised structure