

VIBE

ROBERTO QUINTERO



King Conga

Unknown to most of you, Roberto Quintero has been a force in Latin music for many years and boasts touring and recording credits with stars like Celia Cruz, Marc Anthony, Ray Bar-

retto, Tito Puente, and Jack DeJohnette. He's even recorded on two Grammy-winning records and another that was nominated. Not bad for a soft-spoken percussionist from Venezuela.

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VIBE ROBERTO QUINTERO

Born in Caracas, Quintero grew up in a very musical family and took his first music lessons from his father, Ricardo, who played in the popular Venezuelan group Madera. "My family is very musical," Quintero says. "They are very well known in Venezuela. I was always alongside my dad wherever he went. He played various stringed instruments, and

lives with it. Quintero's father was one of those lives. Just when the young musician was starting to develop his musicality, his role model was taken from him and his world turned upside down. "It destroyed my life."

During his musical hiatus, Quintero focused on karate. Having reached the level of black belt at 16 years old, he

his downtime, Quintero would head over to Central Park and play practically from sun up to sun down just like he did in the streets of Caracas. "I used to do it often, when I had nothing else to do. That's how I started when I first got to New York. I used to go and play for \$3 or \$5 a pop almost all day from 10:00 in the morning to 6:00 at night."

Eventually, Quintero graduated to more lucrative stages. In a seven-year period, he toured seven times with the legendary salsa singer Celia Cruz. "That was the best. She was a very positive person and very influential. Before a show, you would see her barely able to walk, but as soon as she started singing she could dance. She had plenty of energy." During that period, Quintero also played with La India and toured with Marc Anthony in support of his self-titled breakthrough album. In fact, since arriving in the States, Quintero has had a full calendar.

Shortly after the Marc Anthony tour, he became a founding member of Timbalaye and recorded three albums with them. He also headed to Havana, Cuba to record with Issac Delgado twice and even had a few spare moments to put together a video. "A few years

1 VITALS

AGE 36

HOMETOWN Caracas, Venezuela

INFLUENCES Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Jack DeJohnette

CURRENT RELEASE

Steve Khan – *The Green Field*

2 ALL GEARED UP

PERCUSSION LP

CYMBALS Istanbul

HEADS Remo

"I used to go and play for \$3 or \$5 a pop almost all day [in Central Park] from 10:00 in the morning to 6:00 at night"

he taught me traditional songs. He also wrote a birthday song for me when I turned one [year old]. It's called 'Birthday Of The Quinteros' and it's always sung in my family."

At age seven, Quintero started playing the guitar and Venezuelan cuatro but decided to take a break from music after suffering an inexpressible tragedy. On August 15, 1980, a ship carrying Madera sank on the Orinoco River near Puerto Ayacucho and took 11

decided to return to music. "I went to school at the Conservatory Of Music in Caracas, Venezuela. I studied music for almost three years and by age 18, I was playing professionally. I also played with the Youth Symphony Of Venezuela, and then I played with a singer named Oscar De Leon for almost six years. Near the end of 1995, I came to the United States."

His first gig in the States was in a very public stage. During

ago, I did an instructional video with Hal Leonard, *Modern Congas (Timbas Modernas)*, and I am planning on doing a second video. The video covers things from Venezuelan rhythms to Latin jazz. I also cover rudiments because I studied those quite a bit and I apply them to the conga."

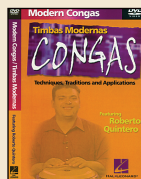
Invariably throughout his career, Quintero has been a Latin percussionist, but his love of jazz has allowed him to collaborate with some of his boyhood idols. "I listen to a lot of jazz. I am a huge fan of Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, and Jack DeJohnette. Recently, I recorded with Jack DeJohnette and John Patitucci on Steve Khan's *The Green Field*. To record with one of my favorite drummers was an honor. I saw Elvin play at the Blue Note, and that was my dream. Tony Williams enchanted me too, but I never got to see him play live."

In many ways, Quintero's life has been a dream come true, but that doesn't mean that he has no regrets. Naturally, he loves touring and recording with legendary musicians, but he would undoubtedly prefer not to have 2,100 miles separating him from his family. After a decade of working endlessly, he was finally able to spend Christmas in his native Venezuela and enjoy himself. "I try to go once a year. This [was] the first Christmas I spent in Venezuela since I moved here. My family is very proud of my success as a musician. It's an accomplishment

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3 INSIDE TRACKS

By **BILLY RAMIREZ**



ROBERTO QUINTERO
MODERN CONGAS
(TIMBAS MODERNAS)
Hal Leonard

Roberto Quintero's 2004 DVD release covers a variety of conga patterns that will have you wailing away in a short amount of time. To whet your appetite, the DVD opens with a jam session by an all-star lineup of Quintero (congas), Max Hobar (sax), Edsel Gomez (piano), Ruben Rodriguez (bass), Roman Diaz (congas, percussion), Ralph Irizarry (timbales, percussion), and Luisito Quintero (drums, percussion).

Though you will be aching to wail away after watching the jam session, you must learn some basic beats first. Quintero introduces you to open, closed, bass, and slap tones, and then

plays a variety of beats using combinations of those tones. He weaves these patterns within 2:3 and 3:2 claves, as well as in several time signatures.

Throughout the DVD, Quintero covers beats in different methods including caballo, songo, and rumba. During the songo section, Irizarry joins on timbales for some extra flavor. Quintero plays patterns in the styles of influential percussionists like Giovanni Hidalgo and Oscar D'Leon, but he also shows examples of beats he has used in his many gigs.

Though the 30-minute running time may seem a bit short, there are actually two videos in one – a Spanish and an English version. Essentially, both versions are the same, but salsa singer Willy Torres joins as translator and clave block player in the English version. Combined, the entire DVD runs over an hour, covers a ton of conga patterns, and speaks two different languages.

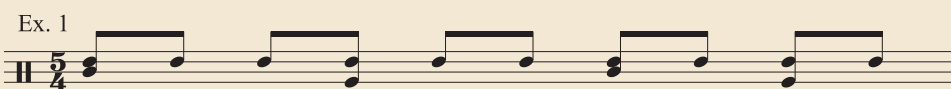
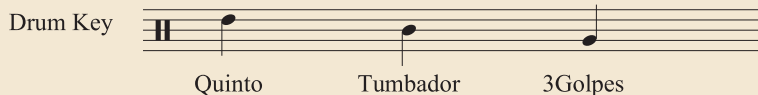
VIBE ROBERTO QUINTERO

4 QUICK LICKS

By ROBERTO QUINTERO

Hand Control For the Modern Conguero

These exercises are for a three conga setup (quinto, conga, tumbador). Essentially, these are exercises found in *Stick Control* that have been modified for percussion applications. The three golpes are known simply as a "conga."

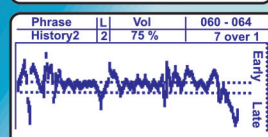
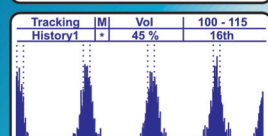
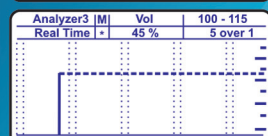
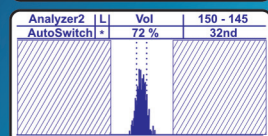
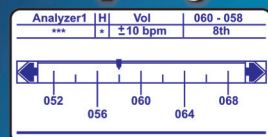


for me as well as for them. To come from a land far away to a country that is completely different and live as a foreigner speaking a different language is very difficult. My family is tremendously supportive. It's a triumph for them and for me, and I thank God that I have such a close family."

Having wrapped up tours with Diane Schuur and Dave Samuels, Quintero may have some time to reacquaint himself with Central Park. Then again, with his schedule, he may not even have time for a cup of coffee. His 2006 agenda is already filling up with a Diane Schuur tour of Thailand and gigs with Gato Barbieri, Caribbean Jazz Project, and Steve Khan. He also has plans for a solo disc and a second DVD. It sounds like a lot of work, but Quintero just smiles and plays on.

"Thank God, I have a full calendar." ■

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