
Eliades Ochoa: "I would like to live more to continue playing"

24/06/2014



Eliades Ochoa would not leave behind his guitar and public for no gold in the world. The chords he “started playing when he was a child in the countryside with his family”, and the applauses, have made of him a happy man.

Eliades Ochoa was one of the founding members of the popular and multi-award winning musical group *Buena Vista Social Club* 20 years ago. He has never boasted on the fact that this group has given Cuba great glory worldwide. He is only happy and proud of having contributed to the Cuban culture along with other important musicians of the island like Ruben Gonzalez, Ibrahim Ferrer, Compay Segundo, and Omara Portuondo.

Bis Music record label has just launched the CD “**El Eliades que soy**” as part of a tribute to his work, and his friendly and natural personality. Besides, there is a homonymous documentary to celebrate the 35th anniversary of his presence in the group *Patria*. He has spent most of his professional career there. To do so, 16 emblematic songs were chosen; namely, “**Pintate los labios, Maria**”, “**Mujer perjura**”, “**Estoy hecho tierra**”, and “**Pregón santiaguero**”.

Bis Music’s director Ela Ramos said the CD was presented to the Latin Grammys 2014.

While celebrating the initiative —not allowing his work to be forgotten— Eliades confessed he felt weird and tried to imitate himself during the recording of the CD in Santiago. He did not recall the opening of some of the selected songs.

Eliades, with his characteristic politeness, agreed to talk with Cubasí.

During the launching of the CD you mentioned: "I used to play to survive. I would like now to live more to continue playing." If you have to recap your life, what makes you proud and what would you never do?

I would **never** give up on my people, Santiago, my songs. I am proud on how people accept me. Children show me their love, and those who were children when the video clip of **Pintate los labios, Maria** came up, love me the same way. When they see me on the streets, they say "hey, look at Eliades". They want a picture with me and it gives me health, strength.

When I was 13, 14 years old, I used to play in simple and prostitute bars in Santiago. I walked with my hat in my hands and people gave me some money; consequently, I could help my parents. I would like to live 50 more years to continue playing my guitar.

You have been very successful with *Buena Vista* the last two decades. Is there any similar future for those street musicians playing in Santiago?

Yes, there is. I had a musician in Patria named Pancho who used to say: "Everything comes in life". And it is true. Some things happened faster than others. But everything comes in life. Life is like a storm, but every storm has its lights. There is a song that reads: "a minute of happiness means twenty of suffering".

You have to live every day at full gallop. We don't know if it may be the last one. We must enjoy life.

Do you really believe this is going to be *Buena Vista*'s last tour? There are many artists who believe there will be always *Buena Vista*.

I do believe it must be the end. Buena Vista should not be performing with that name because there are only few musicians left from the original group, and they are Guajiro Mirabal, Omara, Barbarito in the lute, and Eliades. We are all old people. Even though there are still fans, we should not lie to the public with that name of *Buena Vista*.

Buena Vista was a grand slam thanks to the recordings of Nick Gold and Ry Cooder. We thanked them and they thanked us.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz // Cubasi Translation Staff
