



Blending Afro-Peruvian Traditions with the Spirit of a New Generation, Novalima Breaks Beats and Boundaries on Their New Album *Coba Coba*

Cumbancha to release *Coba Coba* worldwide in January

US/Canada Release Date: January 13, 2009

Europe and ROW Release Date: January 16, 2009

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NOVEMBER 2008 - Since its formation in 2001, **Novalima** has been breaking down boundaries, uniting seemingly irreconcilable genres, communities and generations to create an inspiring movement that has revolutionized the music scene in their native Peru. Founded by four friends from Lima with a shared passion for both traditional Afro-Peruvian music and modern DJ culture, Novalima searches for the common ground between past and future, between tradition and innovation. Their efforts have also helped bridge the divide between the Peruvian mainstream and the Afro-Peruvian community, a minority population that has struggled against discrimination and the threat of cultural dissolution for generations.

While their sound is futuristic and cutting-edge, the roots of Novalima's music stretch back hundreds of years to the times of slavery and Spanish colonial rule. In a far-too-familiar tale, African slaves were brought to Peru as early as the 1500s until the middle of the 19th Century, establishing an outpost of African culture in South America. Over the years, the soul and rhythms of Africa blended with the melodies and instruments of Europe and the Andes. The result is rich musical repertoire that has existed for generations on the periphery of Peruvian popular culture.

In 1995, American pop star **David Byrne** introduced the world to the treasures of Afro-Peruvian music with a compilation CD entitled *The Soul of Black Peru*. The collection helped give international recognition to Afro-Peruvian icons **Susana Baca**, **Eva Ayllón**, **Chabuca Granda**, **Nicómedes Santa Cruz** and others, while sparking a renewed interest back in Peru for a musical scene that had often been overlooked by the broader society.

The founders of Novalima, **Ramon Perez-Prieto**, **Grimaldo Del Solar**, **Rafael Morales**, and **Carlos Li Carrillo**, became friends while in high school in Lima. The children of artists and intellectuals, Ramon, Grimaldo, Rafael and Carlos were well-educated and well-traveled, and while they grew up listening to the popular and folk music of Latin America, they also shared a fascination for rock, pop, reggae, salsa, dance and electronic music.

Indeed, without modern technology, Novalima might not have developed, as the group came together at a time when the four founders were each living in different parts of the world. From their homes in London, Barcelona, Hong Kong and Lima, they started emailing song ideas to each other. These long-distance experiments resulted in their 2002 debut album, the self-titled *Novalima*.

The reception to the album exceeded their wildest expectations, eventually reaching platinum sales status in Peru, and for their next album they invited more Afro-Peruvian musicians to join their recording sessions. The outcome was *Afro*, an album that was released worldwide in 2006 to tremendous acclaim and put Novalima on the international music map. The London *Metro Evening Standard* raved, "Novalima has more than succeeded in bringing the spirit and soul of Peruvian blues into the 21st century." *Afro* held the #1 spot on the US College Music Journal Latin Alternative and New World radio charts for ten weeks combined.



The founders of Novalima have since returned to Lima and invited some of their favorite Afro-Peruvian musicians to become permanent members of their band: **Juan Medrano Cotito**, **Mangüe Vasquez**, **Milagros Guerrero** and **Marcos Mosquera**, as well as **Constantino Alvarez**, a renowned local drummer & percussionist. The partnership between the original cosmopolitan quartet and members of the Afro-Peruvian community has generated a great deal of attention at home, mostly because the divide between black and white in Peru has made these types of collaborations unfortunately rare. A January 2008 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* focused on the ways in which Novalima was introducing a new generation to Afro-Peruvian culture, asserting, "By updating traditional black music, Novalima is bridging racial divides inside Peru." While this social impact was not necessarily their intention at the outset, the members of Novalima cherish the uncommon friendships that have developed through playing music with people of different ethnic and economic backgrounds.

On their new album, **Coba Coba**, Novalima expands on the critically-acclaimed formula they developed with their two previous recordings, while taking their inspiring fusion in new and exciting directions. The album's title is derived from an Afro-Peruvian expression used to incite musicians, much like shouting "Go for it!" or "Take it!" to a musician in the midst of a great solo.

On *Coba Coba*, Novalima delves further into the African roots of Afro-Peruvian music, bringing in influences from its musical cousins reggae, dub, salsa, hip-hop, afrobeat and Cuban son. They take a more organic approach this time around, and the songs more accurately reflect the live sound of the band, thanks to time spent working together as an actual band rather than a studio project. British producer **Toni Economides**, a regular collaborator of **Nitin Sawhney**, **Da Lata**, **Bugz in the Attic** and **4Hero** among others, adds his special touch to the album's mixes. The result is a modern approach to Afro-Peruvian music that has made the genre accessible to a younger and wider public.

The album opens with a dub-flavored version of "Concheperla," a traditional Afro-Peruvian song in the *marinera* style, which was first transcribed by Rafael Morales' great grandmother, a folklorist who researched and documented Afro-Peruvian music in the early 1900s. This is followed by "Libertá," a song that imagines a future where blacks are on an equal footing with whites. "A black man will be president / A black man will be a minister / A black man will be a lawyer / How joyful, the times of freedom!" "Se Me Van," a version of Cotito's "Se Me Van Los Pies," developed out of a late-night jam session at Novalima's studio. It blends elements of West African Afrobeat funk with the syncopated snare drum hits typical of the underground British electronica style known as broken beat.

Another highlight is the updated version of the traditional song "Ruperta / Puede Ser", which blends Afro-Peruvian folklore with deep reggae grooves and the rap of Cuban hip-hop duo **Obsesión**. The achingly restrained "Africa Landó" features powerful lyrics derived from the poem "Ritmos Negros del Peru" by the influential Peruvian poet **Nicomedes Santa Cruz**. **Lucia Vivanco** provides the poignant cello riffs.

Coba Coba moves from there to the funky bass lines of "Coba Guarango," the deep dub of "Camote," and the *salsa dura* (hard salsa) of "Mujer Ajena." Spanish rocker **Gecko Turner** adds guest vocals to "Tumbala", a broken beat funk groove that will surely get dance floors thumping. "Kumaná," with a melody derived from a traditional slave chant, was inspired by the Afro-Peruvian tradition of improvised duels between singers, who try to outdo their competitor with creative and risqué lyrical wordcraft. The song uses a sample of an unknown singer taken from a rare 1950s recording.

The album's penultimate track is the scorching Caribbean groove "Yo Voy" which blends a driving soca beat with traditional Peruvian guitar. Salsa singer **Carlos Uribe** provides the vocals, while New Zealand nu-jazz keyboardist **Mark de Clive Lowe** provides a trippy keyboard solo. *Coba Coba's* coda comes in the form of a slow, dramatic *bolero* sung by **Pedro Urrutia**, a renowned performer of the traditional creole *vals*. As with all of Novalima's songs, "Bolero" explores the boundaries between ancient traditions and modern styles, by adding a subtle digital atmosphere to the emotional vocals.

The success of Novalima's approach was never more evident than during a recent monumental concert in the main public square of Lima. Performing in front of a pulsating crowd of more than 30,000 people, Novalima presented their new vision of Afro-Peruvian music to an astounded and appreciative audience who knew they were witnessing history in the making. *Coba Coba* promises to bring even wider recognition to this innovative group, while furthering their mission to inspire new generations to appreciate and respect the Afro-Peruvian contribution to the world of music. With a fresh and innovative sound that stands on a centuries-old foundation of soul and heritage, Novalima promises to keep Afro-Peruvian expression thriving long into the future.