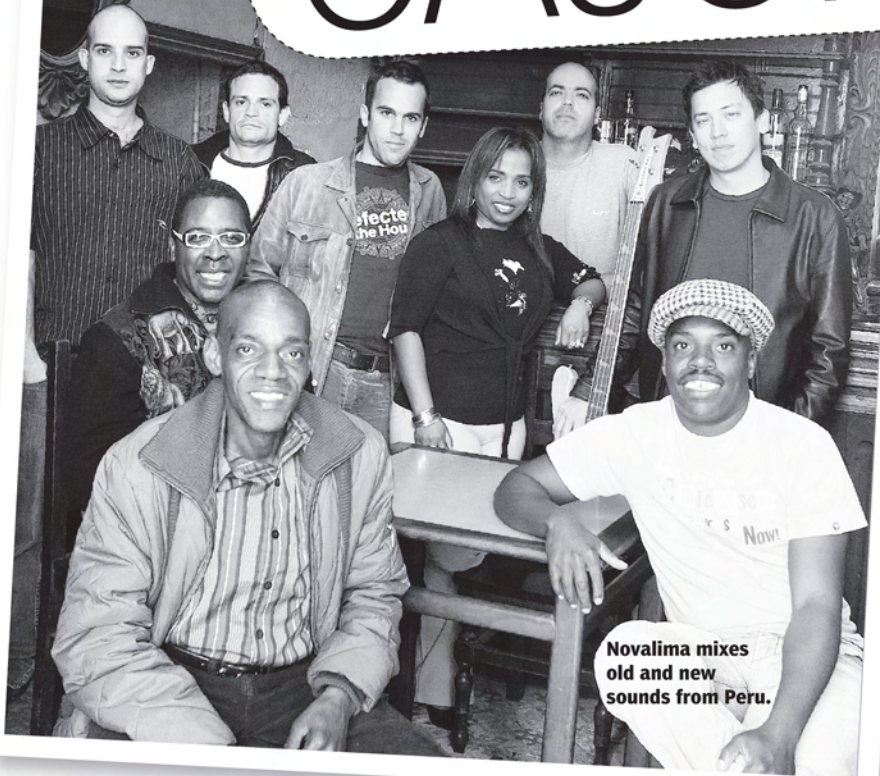


CAJÓN MIX



Novalima mixes old and new sounds from Peru.

BY CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ MARTORELL

FEW WOULD HAVE thought that the ancestral, gritty sounds of Afro-Peruvian music, made from a *cajón* (wooden box) and the rattle of a donkey jawbone, would become a modern sensation.

But it has, thanks to the creative sounds of Novalima, an 8-year-old, four-member Peruvian band that has given a contemporary twist to the music of its country's African slaves.

This month, Novalima is releasing worldwide

its third CD, "Coba Coba," and it's scheduled to bring its electronica-folk infectious brew to New York in March.

"It's different from the rigid, traditional folklore," says deejay and keyboardist Ramón Pérez-Prieto, from Lima, referring to the style popularized by Peruvian artists like Perú Negro and Eva Ayllón.

"And with this twist to the black Peruvian music, we've interested the youth and transmitted

this culture."

He explains that what makes Novalima's sound different is a "little touch" of Moog synthesizer, bass, electronic beats and an electric guitar.

The new CD also strays into a variety of genres, from dub to hip hop to salsa.

The song "Libertá," remembering Peru's abolition of slavery in 1856, is likely to resonate in the U.S. for its lyrics: "Black man will be president / black man will be a lawyer / black man will sing Mass ... because now we're free."

"We actually thought of sending this song to Obama," says Pérez-Prieto, laughing.

The 12-track album includes several original songs mixed with others that are 100 or 200 years old.

"Most of the lyrics are melancholic because they come from the slaves," says Pérez-Prieto, adding that the band has been researching the music for years.

Novalima is the brainchild of four globe-trotting hipsters from Lima: Grimaldo del Solar, Carlos Li Corriño, Rafael Morales and Pérez-Prieto.

"We've known each other since we were 13 or 14," says Pérez-Prieto, the only band member who still lived in Lima, when they released their eponymous-titled first CD in 2003. The others had spread out to London, Barcelona and Hong Kong.

Their second album, "Afro," released in 2005, won an IMA (Independent Music Awards) for Best Album in World Fusion.

For "Coba Coba," the four members regrouped in Lima and added five Afro-Peruvian old hands, including singer Milagros Guerrero and *cajón* player Juan (Cotito) Medrano.

"What started as a collective has become a real band," says Pérez-Prieto. "And you can feel it."

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