



Joaquín Díaz: accordion & lead vocal

1. **Vamos A Bailar** (6:20)
(Joaquín Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)
2. **Una Mañana De Abril** (4:11) (DAR)
3. **Palo Bonito** (3:34)
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4. **Autentico Merengue** (4:48)
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12. **Las Tres Muchachas De Don Pancho**
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13. **Homenaje A San Pedro** (4:45)
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Produced by Joaquín Díaz & Ghyslaine Bernier

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Executive producer & editor: Chris Strachwitz

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JOAQUÍN DÍAZ



MERENGUE ALEGRE



"I was always a musician," says **Joaquín Díaz** who at the age of nine was playing in the streets of his native San Pedro de Macoris in the Dominican Republic where he was born on August 21, 1960. By the age of 12 he had joined a conjunto (group) which had a regular gig at the Hotel del Embajador, the ritziest spot in Santo Domingo at the time, the nation's capital. Now based in Montreal, Canada, Díaz has matured into a consummate artist who delights audiences wherever he goes with his authentic "perico ripiao" merengue.

Díaz plays the *perico ripiao* style of *merengue cibaeño* (the accordion-based variant of the *merengue* from the Cibao region). Characterized by exhilarating, syncopated rhythms, *perico ripiao* is primarily music for dancing but is also a joyful sound for anyone just willing to listen to happy music. A *merengue* song includes three parts: the introduction (*paseo*),

sung verses (when the dancing starts), and improvisation on the accordion (in Díaz's case usually a two row diatonic but sometimes a chromatic instrument).

Seventy years ago *merengue* was a rural music, scorned by polite Dominican society. It gained some status during the U.S. occupation of the country (1916 - 1924) primarily as a nationalist sentiment, but returned to disfavor when the Marines went home. *Merengue* had the dubious honor of being the favored music of dictator Rafael Trujillo (who reigned from 1930 to 1961), a development that certainly encouraged its performance, but may have had, in the long-term, a more negative effect. Trujillo was from working-class roots, but he muscled his way into his political position, as well as into high society.

In the 1940's by order of Dictator Trujillo (all orders coming from the

capital, renamed *Ciudad Trujillo*), *merengue* changed. Trujillo, while not wanting to give up his taste for the music of his roots, wanted *merengue* to be the official national dance of the Dominican Republic. According to ethnomusicologist Deborah Pacini Hernández, "*merengue* was 'dressed up' by band leader and arranger Luis Alberti and introduced to polite society. At that juncture the grass-roots style became known as *típico* or else was referred to with the nickname *perico ripiao*, while the unmodified word *merengue* henceforth remained associated with the more modernized big-band versions." (Pacini Hernández 1995:15). The origin of the term "perico ripiao," according to Pacini Hernández, is open to conjecture but is a term used widely by urbanites and a common explanation is that it refers to the name of a Santiago bar/brothel in the 1930's and the accordion music played there.

While Trujillo certainly succeeded in making *merengue* the national music of the Dominican Republic, it was the modernized *merengue* that received official patronage. The *perico ripiao* style remains, to this day, a marginalized rural style (a *norteamericano* or Anglo version of this story is the domination of “country” radio by the modernized or rock oriented “new country” while



traditional country music is relegated to severely marginalized status, in spite of the tremendous sales of recent traditional country and Bluegrass records!).

It is the gutsy, rural style of merengue that Joaquín Díaz plays: beautiful, authentic, and deeply felt. “The style I play is the true music of the Dominican Republic.” Since the early 1950’s a number of “perico ripiao” conjuntos have made recordings which have been widely distributed where ever Dominicans have settled. The first and perhaps most widely popular of these vernacular groups was Trio Reynoso with Pedro and Domingo Reynoso (sons of Lolo Reynoso) on accordion and güiro and Francisco “Pancholo” Esquea on tambora, and their recordings are still available. Others soon followed, many of which added a saxophone, creating a sound not unlike that of the Monterrey, Mexico based Norteño conjuntos.



The principal instruments in Díaz’s group are the traditional instruments that have been the backbone of the *perico ripiao* style:

Tambora: The tambora is a cylindrical drum, made from the scraped cavity of a palm or pine tree trunk, or from a barrel. Both ends are covered with goatskins (male on one side and female on the other), which are fastened by a hoop of wood. The sound from the female side is produced with the bare hand, and the sound from the male side is made with a wooden stick.

Güiro: A scored metal cylinder that is rubbed with a metal stick. The güiro is an essential part of the *conjunto* de merengue of the *perico ripiao* variety.

Accordion: The accordion became a part of the regional *conjunto* sound beginning in the late nineteenth century but only came into full bloom and popularity in the 1940’s when the first commercial recordings were made. Prior to the ’40’s that the guitar dominated *merengue* throughout the Dominican Republic.

Vamos a Bailar (Let's Go Dance)

(Joaquín Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)

He sacado esta merengue I have released this merengue
de toda mi inspiración, of my inspiration
Vamos todos a bailar Let's all go and dance
Este sabroso merengón To this delicious merengue

Cuando Joaquín Díaz toca When Joaquín Díaz plays
Siempre esta muy sonriente He is always smiling
A todo el mundo le gusta All the world likes
A bailar, los canadienses To dance, "los canadienses"

chours: con Joaquín Díaz chorus: with Joaquín Díaz
vamos a bailar let's all dance

Palo Bonito (Beautiful Drum Stick)

Palo Bonito refers to drum sticks used during special ceremonies, such as praying to saints. (Joaquín Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)

Tengo a San Antonio, I have San Antonio
Puesto de cabeza Placed upon my head
Tu me busca novia, You will find me a girlfriend
Y a nadie le interesa Nobody is interested

chorus: Palo, palo, palo, palo, bonito chorus: Palo, palo, palo, palo bonito
Palo, he, he, he, he, palo bonito palo he Palo, he, he, he, he palo bonito palo he

Virgin compañera mia, My Virgin companion
Tu, para tu casa, You to your house,
Y yo para la mia and myself to mine as well

chorus chorus

Enero, Febrero, Marzo, Abril, y Mayo January, February, March, April, and May
Son los cinco meses primero del año They are the first five months of the year

chorus chorus

Antonio bendito te vengo a rogar, Saint Antonio I beg of you
Busca me una novia, Que me quiere casar Find me a girlfriend, because I want to marry

chorus chorus

Auténtico Merengue (Authentic Merengue)

(Joaquín Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)

El merengue bueno nace en el Cibao, Good merengue was born in Cibao
Por eso le toco Perico Ripiao that's why I play it Perico Ripiao

chorus: Perico Ripiao chorus: Perico Ripiao

Con este acordeon caliente y meloso With this accordion that is hot and melodic
La gente se siente, se siente sabroso The people they feel, they feel very good

chorus: Se siente sabroso chorus: They feel very good

Cuanto pepillito bailando de lado How many little boys dancing along side
Cuanto pepillito bailando de lado How many little boys dancing along side
Con su pepillita bien acurrucao With their little girls with whom they are tight
bien arremachao Good and close

en Santo Domingo, se baila el merengue In Santo Domingo, you dance merengue
Y alla en Puerto rico lo bailan tambien And in Puerto Rico, they dance it as well
Y alla en Nueva York lo bailan mejor And in New York they dance even better
Y alla en Montreal lo bailan también And in Montreal they dance it as well

Cuanto pepillito bailando de lado How many little boys dancing along side
con su pepillita bien acurrucao with their little girls with whom they are tight
Vamos pa'l Cibao, Let's go to Cibao,
A bailar de lado So we can dance alongside one another
bien acurrucao, Good and close ,
bailando de lado dancing alongside one another

Merengue Alegre (Happy Merengue)
(Joaquín Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)

Canto este merengue,
de mi inspiración
Yo tengo alegría en mi corazón

I sing this merengue
of my inspiration
I have joy in my heart

chorus: Yo tengo alegría chorus: I have joy

Desde pequeñito,
yo toco mi acordeon
Que desde muchachito,
yo toco mi acordeon
Me gusta el merengue
con mi acordeon

Since very small,
I've played my accordion
I said that as a boy,
I've played my accordion
I like merengue
with my accordion

chorus: con mi acordeon
con el acordeon chorus: with my accordion
with the accordion

Yo con mi acordeon de 21 notas
Me lleva las feas
y las buen hermosas

With my 21 note accordion
I get both the ugly
and the very beautiful

chorus: y las buen hermosas
Corazón, corazón
No me quiere matar, corazón

chorus: and the very beautiful
heart of mine, heart of mine
does not want to kill me, heart of mine

Canto esta merengue
de mi inspiración
Yo tengo alegría en mi corazón

I sing this merengue
of my inspiration
I have joy in my heart

Las Tres Muchachas De Don Pancho (Don Pancho's Three Girls)
(Joaquín Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)

Oye muchacho, dime una cosa
y ven acá
Una noticia
que me han dado por allá

Hey man, tell me one thing
and come over here
About some news
that I've heard around the way

Que están de fiesta,
por allí, por el barrio
Las tres muchachas
de Pancho van por allá

That they are celebrating
in the neighborhood
Pancho's three girls a
are walking that way

Son tres muchachas bonitas de verdad
Tienen unos ojos
que encantan al mirar
Y yo que tengo amor con una
Y si la fiesta amanece,

They are truly three pretty girls
They have eyes
that please upon sight
I have love for one
And if the celebration continues

Usted verá

You shall see

Me la llevo y me la llevo
Escondida de su papá
Aunque la guardia me salga
Y me tenga que matar

I will take her and I will take her
Hidden from her father
Even if the authorities search for me
And have to kill me

Y cuando llegue al alcalde
Aquí no se baila mas
Que yo, con mi morenita
De la curbita por allá

And when the mayor gets there
The dancing will have stopped
I with my sweetheart
"De la curbita" around the way

Homenaje a San Pedro (Homage to San Pedro)

(Joaquín Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)

Le dedico este merengue
A San Pedro de Macorís
Tierra de mucha cultura
Pueblo de donde nací
Mi San Pedro de Macorís
Brillante como el sol

todo el mundo bien lo sabe
De allí salen los mejores
Mi San Pedro de Macorís
brillante como el sol
todo el mundo bien lo sabe,
De allí salen los mejores

Y Pedro Guerrero,
chorus: de Macorís

Y Sami Sosa,

Rafael Martínez es de Macorís

Y Jorge Bell, es de Macorís

Joaquíncito Díaz, es de Macorís

Y Papo Ross, es de Macorís

Y el loco Cucutiñ, de Macorís

Y Sami Sosa, es de Macorís

Y Pedro guerrero, de Macorís

Voy pa'el malecón
a beber mucho rum,

Pa'l Hotel Macorís,

chorus: es de Macorís

I dedicate this merengue
to San Pedro de Macorís
Land of much culture
Town where I was born
My San Pedro de Macorís
Shining bright like the sun

All the world knows very well
That the best come from there
My San Pedro de Macorís
shining bright like the sun
All the world knows very well
That the best come from there

And Pedro Guerrero
chorus: of Macorís

And Sammy Sosa,

Rafael Martínez is from Macorís

And Jorge Bell, is from Macorís

Joaquíncito Díaz, is from Macorís

And Papo Ross, is from Macorís,

And the crazy Cucutiñ, of Macorís

And Sammy Sosa, is from Macorís

And Pedro Guerrero, of Macorís

I'm going to the sea wall
to drink a lot of rum

To the Hotel Macorís,

chorus: is from Macorís

**Joaquín Díaz:** accordion, lead vocal

For these recordings the musicians are as follows:

Track #s 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11

Humberto Familia "Pichi": bass

Ramón Ortiz: drums, tambora

Tabaré Filippini: güira, bongos

Miguel Fintón: congas, palo

Track #s 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13

Francisco Meza: bass, backing vocals

Ramón Ortiz: drums, tambora, backing vocals

André Dupuis: congas, backing vocals

Tabaré Filippini: güira, backing vocals

Hermés Cardozo: backing vocals

Produced by Joaquín Díaz & Ghyslaine Bernier

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JOAQUÍN DÍAZ

MERENGUE ALEGRE

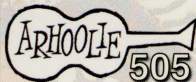


Joaquín Díaz - accordion, vocals
with güiro, tambora and bass.

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