Joaquin Díaz: accordion & lead vocal

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2. Una Mañana De Abril (4:11) (DAR)
3. Palo Bonito (3:34) (Joaquin Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)
4. Autentico Merengue (4:48) (Joaquin Díaz - Tradition Music Co.)
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Produced by Joaquin Diaz & Ghyslaine Bernier
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Executive producer & editor: Chris Strachwitz
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"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 Macorís 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 grassroots 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 wherever 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" Esqueda 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.

**Guíro:** A scored metal cylinder that is rubbed with a metal stick. The guíro 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 de toda mi inspiración,  
Vamos todos a bailar  
Este sabroso merengón  
Cuando Joaquín Díaz toca  
Siempre esta muy sonriente  
A todo el mundo le gusta  
A bailar, los canadienses
chorus: con Joaquín Díaz vamos a bailar

I have released this merengue of my inspiration  
Let's all go and dance  
To this delicious merengue  
When Joaquín Díaz plays  
He is always smiling  
All the world likes  
To dance, “los canadienses”
chorus: with Joaquín Díaz 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,  
Puesto de cabeza  
Tu me busca novia,  
Y a nadie le interesa
chorus: Palo, palo, palo, palo, bonito  
Palo, he, he, he, he, palo bonito palo he  
Virgin compaña hera mia,  
Tu, para tu casa,  
Y yo para la mia
chorus

I have San Antonio  
Placed upon my head  
You will find me a girlfriend  
Nobody is interested
chorus: Palo, palo, palo, palo bonito  
Palo, he, he, he, he palo bonito palo he  
My Virgin companion  
You to your house, and myself to mine as well
chorus

El merengue bueno nace en el Cibao,  
Por eso le toco Perico Ripiao  
Con este acordeón caliente y meloso  
La gente se siente, se siente sabroso
chorus: Se siente sabroso

Good merengue was born in Cibao  
that's why I play it Perico Ripiao  
With this accordion that is hot and melodic  
The people they feel, they feel very good
chorus: They feel very good

Antonio bendito te vengo a rogar,  
Busca me una novia, Que me quiere casar
chorus

Saint Antonio I beg of you  
Find me a girlfriend, because I want to marry
**Merengue Alegre** (Happy Merengue)

**Chorus:**
I sing this merengue of my inspiration
I have joy in my heart

**Verse:**
I sing this merengue of my inspiration
I have joy in my heart

**Chorus:**
I have joy

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:**
With my accordion

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

**Chorus:**
In the neighborhood they are celebrating
Pancho's three girls are walking that way
They are truly three pretty girls
They have eyes that please upon sight
I have love for one
And if the celebration continues
You shall see

Hey man, tell me one thing and come over here
About some news that I've heard around the way
That they are celebrating in the neighborhood
Pancho's three girls are walking that way
They are truly three pretty girls
They have eyes that please upon sight
I have love for one
And if the celebration continues
You shall see

The dancing will have stopped
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

And when the mayor gets there
The dancing will have stopped
I with my sweetheart “De la curbita” around the way
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
Joaquín Díaz, es de Macorís
Y Papo Ross, es de Macorís,
Y el loco Cucuríñ, de Macorís
Y Sami Sosa, es de Macorís
Y Pedro guererro, de Macorís

Voy pa’ el malecón
a beber mucho rum,
Pal’ 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 Sammi Sosa,
Rafael Martínez is from Macorís
And Jorge Bell, is from Macorís
Joaquín Díaz, is from Macorís
And Papo Ross, is from Macorís,
And the crazy Cucuríñ, of Macorís
And Sammi 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, vocals
with güiro, tambora and bass.

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