

# The Yukon: Home to an Afro-Cuban Beat



A Cuban band, Valle Son, has entered an incongruous marriage with Yukon producer Caribou Records. The result is *No Se Tire Compay*, a CD that has a joyful sound that gets the body moving.

Early June here in the Yukon is magic.

After the cold and fear of frost, to hear a CD by Valle Son is just what the doctor ordered: a tonic to get the winter weary bones mov-

ing and forgotten muscles motivated for dance. Joyful sound.

I think it's a few degrees hotter today because I have been listening to this fantastic Afro Cuban fusion over and over. I find myself



## DIScourse

with Bill Polonsky

tapping pencils on tabletops and cups to add my own counter rhythm.

My dog wakes up and regards me askance.

While not technically a Yukon band, Valle Son is on Caribou Records. This most incongruous of musical marriages has born fruit yet again in the form of a second release, *No Se Tire Compay*.

This jewel of a band plays their own version Cuban Son, the progenitor of modern salsa music with roots in African percussion and Cuban country music.

Son music has a long history that has followed the revolutionary history of Cuba and its people.

The vocalists make the most of their space in the music. Voices that exude joy and passion call out from these tracks floating in and around with sweet harmonies.

*Para Bueno Yo* starts with its chorus of close harmony and explodes into a quick rap at one point then quickly back to harmony. Moments of jazz, rap and salsa fusion all within one song: seamless in its execution.

The reeds in the Valle Son arrangement – bassoon and saxophone – fill in and add flavour to the already spicy mix by rounding and mellowing the harder edges adding harmonics and timbre that you may not expect. The saxophone also allows a real jazz fla-

voir to develop from within the order of the rhythm.

The flute allows the music to lay back a bit and affords a bit of breath to the arrangement of Fantasia Otonal.

*Oyo Como Va*, written by Tito Puente and popularized by Carlos Santana, is re-invented as a cool breeze of saxophone improvisation and acoustic guitar strumming.

Tres guitar, a three-note six-stringed guitar playing the piano figure, strolls in and out of the music allowing a subtler edge than the piano could. This small detail is one of many that give Valle Son an original take on this music.

Perhaps this is the key to the Cuban/Yukon connection, the urban edges rejected in favour of a more agrarian feel.

These small subtleties combine to create a portrait of sunshine and warmth created and produced in the Yukon.

Valle Son will be in town at the end of June, playing two dates, first at the closing party of the Yukon Film Festival, Shipyards Park on the 25th and on June 30 a record release show will be held at Rotary Park.

Email Caribou Records at caribou@yuknet.ca for complete details.

This album and the previous release by Valle Son, *Son De Cuba* are available in town at Steve's Music.

Caribou Records provided this CD for review.

Visit Bill Polonsky's website at [www.strangethingsdone.com](http://www.strangethingsdone.com).

# Is Your Spirit Half Full or Half Empty?



## Caribouisms

with Johnny Caribou

### DAWSON CITY

Living in a small town like Dawson City has its perks.

Everyone knows most everyone and generally, we all get along with each other.

Ain't that grand?

But when you're around each other all the time, sometimes you end up running into each other over various things. As the old saying goes: #@% happens.

Sometimes it is not too nice and can be enough to drive you to live in a big city.

Call it a character flaw for us Dawsonites.

But most of these mistakes are not enormous; they are just small blemishes that balloon into a Dome.

See, many of us here possess an ability to forgive each other when

we make a mistake. We become tolerant of each other and are quick to make an excuse for each other when the occurrence happens. This is how we overlook the offence don't you know.

It's also our coping mechanism, which undoubtedly, is a good thing.

But when you live here at the end of the road, everyone has a story; everyone never really forgets how they got here.

Unfortunately, we do that with each other's mistakes, too.

We forgive them but we never really forget them.

At times, this inability to forget is the overcast that clouds our blue sky; it becomes the paddle that guides our canoe in the river.

I think you know what I'm talking about.

But as I get wiser (thankfully my poetic license hasn't expired yet and I am allowed to use words like "wiser" rather than "older") I have come to see the mistakes we make against each other and the inability to forget them differently.

Life is a glass of water.

Each day you hold one cup's worth.

Careful, it's precious.

And as you progress through your day, you end up using the water in your cup.

What this means is that you only have a limited supply of water, that when your cup runs out for that day, your energy is spent and you must shut down for some horizontal time in order to replenish yourself.

With such a limited supply, each one of us each day must ask a question:

How do you want to spend your water today?

Life is short.

As we get older, time seems

to fly even faster. So ask yourself a question the next time somebody does something that burns your bridge down: with only a limited supply of water, is this mistake this person made worth any of my precious supply of water? Is never forgetting what they did really how I want to spend my water?

My water nourishes my family, friends and music festivals.

It's a drink that makes living anywhere refreshing, it's a drink that's worth never forgetting.

## Yukon Conservation Society's FREE INTERPRETIVE HIKES

Hike Schedule: Leaving from the YCS office at 302 Hawkins (Corner of 3rd & Hawkins)  
All hikes start July 1

Monday  
LAKES  
TRAIL  
1pm-4pm

Tuesday  
ED-VENTURES  
(ages 4-6)  
10am-12pm

Wednesday  
GREY  
MOUNTAIN  
10am-4pm  
(bring lunch)

Thursday  
EDVENTURES  
(age 7-10)  
10am-12pm

Friday  
FISH LAKE  
10am-4pm  
(bring lunch)

HIDDEN LAKES  
3pm-5pm

CLIFF WALK  
To Long Lake  
1pm-5pm

CANYON CITY HIKES: 7 Days a week, 10am and 2pm (2 hours long each)  
hikes leave from miles canyon

For more information,  
call 668-5678  
Visit us at 302 Hawkins  
Monday to Friday 9am-4pm  
[www.yukonconservation.org](http://www.yukonconservation.org)  
Or just come at hike time!  
Self Transportation required, but will take  
spares who don't have a vehicle

Special Theme Hikes  
see our brochure  
July 1-August 20  
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