

Mi Solar • Salsa, Timba, Latin-Jazz (Berlin, Kuba)

solar, (el) (m.): (Cuban) inner courtyard; a place of pulsating life,
with parties and dancing to salsa rhythms.



Cuba in Berlin - That's Mi Solar, the salsa band that embodies what its name implies. Any place where these musicians perform is transformed into a throbbing grooving atmosphere.

Mi Solar plays an **electrifying hot and danceable mix** of traditional and modern Cuban music, with **surprisingly fresh arrangements** of Latin-American classics as well as original compositions, spiced with Latin-Jazz elements. "Mi solar delivers a sound that couldn't be more Cuban and more Caribbean" (Musikansich) with "clearly more variation than some productions made by salsa superstars." (salsaholic) The audience gets down, it's hot and everyone's dancing, and what about a mojito? **A perfect Cuban atmosphere!**

Previous performances

Mi Solar played its first concert in Brandenburg in March, 2004. Since then, Mi Solar has performed at:

Open Air Events: with the Carnival of the cultures - Berlin's largest multi-cultural street festival (2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008), 3. Potsdam event night, summer festival, English Garden/ Berlin, Festival at the Nauener Tor/ Potsdam,

in salsa discos and clubs: Fontane Klub/ Brandenburg a.d.Havel, HAVANNA/ Berlin, Tropicando/ Potsdam, Casa Latina/ Dresden, Floridita/ Vienna, Circulo/ Munich, Kaffee Burger/ Berlin, Felix Restaurant, Junction Bar

Festivals: Montreux Jazz Festival/ Switzerland (2005/ 2006), Latin-Chem (Latin Music & Dance Festival), Praterinsselfestiva/ Munich, Museumsinsel Festival/ Berlin (in cooperation with Piranha Events), Bergmannstraße jazzt / Berlin, Jazz- und Bluestage/ Zinnowitz

and: Randlage/ Eschede, Schloss Wackerbarth, German Red Croce, Deutsche Kinderhilfe, Bundesministerium für Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, Werkstatt der Kulturen/ Berlin, Palais in der Kulturbrauerei/ Berlin, 2. Pub tour/ Belgig, Long Night of the Museums/ Berlin, Music in the Zoo/ Leipzig, et al.

in addition: winner of a studio price from the Berlin Government of Culture. Finalist of the "Creole World music" competition, Berlin and World Jazz-Award „Ella 2006", Berlin **The musicians**

Mi Solar on the Internet: www.crossculturemusic.de/mi_solar

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Musicians biographies

Mayelis Guyat (lead vocals, composition) – A small "Guantanamera" sat in front of the radio and sang along with all the songs; she dreamed of appearing onstage herself. Her mother insisted on a university degree in English. In 1995 Mayelis turned her dream into a reality when she toured with a band through Cuba and appeared with renowned salseros in the longest son in the world (Guinness). In her chosen city of Havana she became the front singer for the well-known **Cotó y su Eco del Caribe** in 2000. Later Mayelis enjoyed great success in Berlin's halls singing with **Musical Paradise Road**. Today a resident of Berlin, she follows in the footsteps of her role models Celia Cruz, Isaac Delgado, Gilberto Santa Rosa - and like them, she infects audiences with this mix of zest for living and joy. Her university diploma is hanging on the wall in Guantánamo.



Jotham Bleiberg (trumpet, composition, vocals), was only five years old, when he started to play the trumpet. In 2000 he received his High School Diploma at the School of the Arts in San Francisco/USA. Then, with a scholarship, he studied classical trumpet at the San Francisco State University. During his studies, he made first experiences in Latin-American music playing with local salsa-bands. After living four years in the USA, he finished his classical studies at the **University of Arts in Berlin** in 2005. Since 2002, Jotham Bleiberg studies at the Jazz Institute Berlin and receives lessons from Gerard Presencer, Jiggs Wigham, and others. Jotham teaches trumpet at the Schlot Musikschule in Berlin. Current projects: **La Mula, Orquesta Caché, BTO, Blackmail-Berlin, Kompass Big Band**.



Linnett Carrillo (piano), our "Cubanita", born in Havana in 1980, has been a band member since October, 2005. At the age of 7, L. began an 8-year program in classical piano studies at the A. G. Caturia Music School. Later, she completed her degree in orchestra, solo, piano accompaniment and pedagogy at the Amando Roldan School of Music. She has participated and won prizes in piano competitions for creativity and composition. In 2001 she was invited by the Berkley School of Music (USA). Linnett has worked with **Duo Son Cubanos, Las Chicas des sol, Karina y su Chicale, Conjunto Folklorico J.J.** and the musical **Lady Salsa**. She also teaches at music schools. In Europe she has performed in France, Italy and in Germany with Linie Neun in Darmstadt and in A-Trane, Quasimodo and Unique Music Lounge in Berlin.



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Musicians biographies II

Maike Scheel (bass, composition). In the early 1990s she played in various pop and funk bands and was a co-founder of the women's funk band **ZEST**. Engagements in jazz and world music formations followed. During her study at the **Hanns Eisler Academy of Music** in Berlin and the Bass Collective/New York she discovered her enthusiasm for salsa music – even before the Buena Vista Social Club boom. In 2002 she appeared as a guest at the International Jazz Festival in Havana with the salsa band **Clarissa y las Diablitas**. She took advantage of her stay in Cuba to supplement her musical studies on-site. Back in Berlin, Mi Solar was formed, the project that is currently close to her heart and with which she is making her dream of playing her own compositions and arrangements a reality.



Gabriele Kostas (percussion, congas, composition) – Since completing her studies in philosophy, history and art history, Gabriele Kostas has worked as a freelance percussionist.



As well as appearing with musicians from a wide variety of stylistic directions, she also presents solo percussion concerts. She collaborates with actors, dancers, visual artists and filmmakers. Her own compositions have been released on the CDs "Herzschlag" and "Stein Klang." In addition to her performing activity, she teaches or has taught as director at the **Accademia Bergamo Musica** in Italy, as **lecturer at the State Music Academy** in Berlin and the **Study Group on School Music**, as head of the percussion department at the **School of Music** in Berlin, as workshop author for the magazine "**drums & percussion**" and as guest professor for sound installations at the **University/Academy of Art** in Kassel.

Philipp Bombste Kullen (drums, timbales), born in Berlin in 1979, began to take percussion lessons with Tom Holm at the age of six. At twelve he was playing in school ensembles and shortly thereafter in rock bands. He acquired specialized knowledge of Latin-American percussion in Cuba, where he studied with various musicians and played Afro-Cuban percussion with the band **La Tendencia**.

He studied congas with **Jorge Delgado** in New York and learned the combination of different instruments and rhythms – multipercussion - in Berlin with Daniel "Topo" Gioia. Philipp Kullen currently plays with **Keith Tynes, Ray Blue, Fanfara Kalashnikov, Malanga, Derya Takkali** and **Telmo Pires**.



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Musicians biographies III

Miguel Lagos (percussion, vocals). Born in Berlin of Chilean heritage. At the age of 8 he started playing the drums, taking lessons from different teachers. At 19, he switched to Randy Black at the Drumfactory in Berlin. In the beginning of his musical career he focused on Rock- Pop- Samba- and Soul-music, which later extended to Speedpunk, Deathmetal, Reggae and Funk.

Since 2004 he has been active in the latin scene where he moves like a fish in water. Independently minded, he plays a large variety of repertoire. He also performs as a background singer and Guiro player with **Malanga**. He has worked with: **Ricardo Moreno, La Mula, Chico Trujillo, Atztekanayas, Surifico, Enrico Perez, Proyecto Brutal** and **Los Bomberos de Monte Cruz**.



Damian Blanco (vocals), from Havanna, found his musical roots at the age of 5 in his grandmother's courtyard where he learned to sing and play the guitar. He likes to experiment with dance, voice and percussion. Most important is the musical freedom to explore his voice. In various styles like: Son, Cha Cha, Salsa, Timba, Mambo, Bolero and Hip Hop where he feels at home musically.



Damian lives in Berlin since 2000 and performs frequently as a back-up singer in Latin bands such as: **La Familia, Malanga, Ricardo Moreno & Latin Explosion, Sonido Tres** and **Adonis y Soneros de Hoy**. He is a permanent member of Mi Solar and has performed as soloist at the 1st Festival del Bolero in February, 2006.

When asked where in Berlin he finds his inspiration Damian answers: "In the street, multi-cultural events, parties, jam sessions - like in grandma's courtyard."

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Discography

"Amistad" Skycap records (distribution: Roughtrade) march 2008

Excerpts from CD reviews

"Already when listening for the first time the musicians with Cuban singer Mayelis Guyat trigger memories of Santiago's old glory. Rich trumpet sounds set the tone for the hottest of all rhythms; outstanding percussion and especially the impressive voice of Mayelis complement each other perfectly. [...] From the opening "Dile A Catalina" to "La Isla" and "Profundo" to "Lágrimas Negras," **Mi Solar is surprising and thrilling**, as much with its original compositions overflowing with a zest for life as with fresh arrangements of classical Latin American pieces. Mi Solar doesn't leave you any choice: It is all too tempting to get infected with the feel of the Caribbean. (*blue rhythm/jazzthing, March 2008*)

"Throbbing congas, powerful piano chords, some razor-sharp horn phrases and things really get cooking! Mayelis Guyat has a voice that doesn't let you walk away. Mi Solar's salsa is simply where it's at, with imaginative melodies, jazzy solos, wonderfully precise yet forceful percussion breaks. The only thing this band can't do is hit the brakes. Even if a song starts out as a soulful ballad, within two minutes they've had enough of being sentimental and hit the gas. Such a **packed, authentic sound** comes right out of the Caribbean - that's what you think, but the palm trees on the cover are standing next to Berlin's Reichstag dome." (*Westfälischer Anzeiger, 26 March 2008*)

"It is not very easy to assign Mi Solar's songs to a clear-cut category. "Señora" develops from a romantic salsa, with passages that might prove hard for some novice dancers to stay in step, to a rousing timba, in which it is pretty hard to lose the beat. "La Isla" starts out as a guaguancó rhythm, fading into a danceable salsa, and returning at the end for another delightful forty seconds of the Afro-Cuban guaguancó. But my absolute favorite on this CD is "Profundo". At first a languishing bolero with a stunning vocal performance by Mayelis Guyat, the song changes midway into a lively salsa. [...] **This band needn't be afraid of being compared to the big ones of the business** – and the seven original compositions on this cd offer **clearly more variation than some productions made by salsa superstars.**" (*salsaholic, March 2008*)

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more Excerpts from CD reviews

“For purists among Cuban music fans, who view the ancient originals from Cuba as the only legitimate representatives of Caribbean salsa rhythms, the lineup alone might seem sacrilegious: Almost the entire rhythm section of the band is comprised of women. Band founder is the German bassist Maike Scheel, and the wonderful lead singer is also a woman, Mayelis Guyat - generally singing original lyrics - whose interpretations do not need to fear comparison with those of the dazzling Celia Cruz. Right with the first song Mi Solar sweeps away the suspicion of having to expect a boring, conventional imitation of Caribbean music by some German band with a musical firework that **leaves you breathless**. [...] This means that Mi Solar is not only fit for worldmusic-festivals but also shakes every dance-floor and the coming backyard parties. So: Buy the cd and start partying!!!” (*aponaut, March 2008*)

“The Mi Solar band from Berlin offers a sound **overflowing with musicality and a joy in music-making**. Funky rhythms and horn phrases combined with expressive vocals make you want to dance; they enhance your mood considerably, even without alcohol. [...] Accompanied by top-class musicians, Mayelis Guyat recorded most of the songs in a single take. You can clearly hear that spontaneity. It is not cool and removed, like so many over-produced discs; no, every one of the nine pieces is **hot and alive**.” (*Weltmusik-Magazin, March 2008*)

“On their Amistad album, the Mi Solar band plays “**real Cuban**” music mixing salsa, timba, bolero, and guaguancó, without listeners ever noticing that the band is not “**real Cuban**” at all, but from Berlin.” (*Jazzthetik, March 2008*)

“This is an album that distinguishes itself through the music and the passion to make music. [...] The CD is **exciting and shows great diversity** and great potential in expressing a culture.” (*JazzZeitung (online), March 2008*)

“Mi solar delivers a sound that couldn't be more Cuban and more Caribbean – even though the band comes from Berlin, Germany. Traditional and modern Cuban music is underlined with elements from Jazz, Salsa, Timba, Soul and Funk. So the **listener immediately dreams of sun, white beaches and cool mojitos**.” *Musikansich*