



PRESS RELEASE



MAITE HONTELÉ & RAMÓN VALLE
HAVANA
IOR CD 77163-2



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|-------------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Lo Que Tienes Tú | (4:03) | 6. Almendra | (4:52) | Maite Hontelé - <i>flugelhorn</i> |
| 2. La Mulata Rumbera | (4:22) | 7. Obsesión | (6:16) | Ramón Valle - <i>piano</i> |
| 3. Johanna | (4:28) | 8. Odjus Fitchádu | (6:15) | |
| 4. Tributo | (6:13) | 9. Porro Con Ramón | (4:42) | |
| 5. Havana Morning Light | (4:00) | | | |

MAITE HONTELÉ & RAMÓN VALLE HAVANA (IN+OUT Records)

Recorded in the musical heart of Havana after a series of performances at the legendary Jazz Plaza Festival, trumpeter Maite Hontelé and pianist Ramón Valle present their first duo album – an ode to their musical friendship, the freedom of improvisation, and their shared love for Cuban music. *Havana* sounds like an intimate live performance: colourful, playful, and rich in musical dialogue.

A promise: playing from the heart

After a five-year break, Maite picked up her flugelhorn again two years ago to perform a one-off concert with Ramón. Their collaboration resulted in a warm and memorable performance. "When I started playing again, I promised myself to only play from the heart," says Maite. "Not worrying about the right notes, but staying true to my own inspiration."

Ramón, too, once made himself a promise. Born in Cuba, classically trained yet captivated by jazz, he chose his own path in Europe, developing a unique style free from Latin clichés, allowing his musical voice to speak fully. "I want every note to feel sung, for my fingers to follow my inspiration – not the other way around."

"Playing with Ramón always makes me happy," Maite smiles. "Whether it's a concert or a rehearsal – we play like two children, open, free, curious. A rehearsal feels like a mini concert, and every concert is different. Ramón often calls it *levitando*." A word meaning living in the moment, playing with a spontaneous, open heart.

Musical conversations, notes that touch

In this duo, flugelhorn and piano take equally leading roles, constantly interacting. Sometimes Ramón creates an exciting rhythmic landscape for the flugelhorn to navigate. Other times, Maite invites the piano to weave new melodic

lines around hers – at times reminiscent of a Bach fugue. "These are vivid musical dialogues," they say, "where we listen to each other with respect, trust each other completely, and dare to speak our minds." Serious conversations that may end in musical laughter. Chats that begin playfully but develop into deep dialogues.

Maite Hontelé: surprise and wonder

In this new musical context, Maite reveals a surprisingly different side of herself, as if she has reinvented her playing. She studied Latin and jazz trumpet at Rotterdam Conservatory, winning the hearts of salsa and Latin jazz lovers worldwide. Around 2008, she moved to Colombia to form her own band, performing with legends such as Rubén Blades, Isaac Delgado, and Óscar D'León. Her album *Cuba Linda* won a Cubadisco Award, Cuba's most prestigious music prize, and was nominated for a Latin Grammy. In 2019, she temporarily stepped away



from her trumpet career, returned to the Netherlands, and became artistic director of the Music Meeting Festival and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra.

Now she is breathing new life into her musical career. On flugelhorn she sounds freer than ever – curious, intuitive, true to what moves her.

Her warm flugelhorn tone and lyrical phrasing evoke memories of Miles Davis, Chet Baker, and her idol Alfredo “Chocolate” Armenteros, known for his melancholic, emotionally charged sound.

This album shows just how much beautiful music lives within this brave and versatile woman, with playing that both surprises and delights.

Ramón Valle: a musical world in himself

Anyone who has seen Ramón Valle live understands why he is regarded as one of the most expressive and original pianists in the Afro-Cuban jazz scene. Born in Cuba, classically trained and shaped by jazz, he has performed on major international stages and collaborated with artists such as Roy Hargrove, Marcus Miller, and Chucho Valdés. He has received several awards, including a Cubadisco for his album *The Art of Two*.

Valle embodies his music – whether playing with an orchestra, a trio, or in this intimate duo setting. His playing is open, intense, and unpredictable. He hides nothing, takes risks, and explores boundaries. He paints with sound, evoking cinematic landscapes that touch deeply. As one concertgoer once said: “The way you bare your soul on stage makes me want to fall in love with you.”

His playing reveals influences of Cuban rhythms like son montuno and danzón, but never as cliché. Sometimes the clave is clear, then comes the suggestion of timbales or a bassline, or he creates an entirely new groove, characteristic of his rhythmic mastery.

He also conjures sounds from the piano reminiscent of other instruments: the deep resonance of a double bass, the sliding of a violin, the plucking of a harp, or the staccato of percussion – sometimes all at once. It is as if he speaks with multiple voices simultaneously.

His melodies have a lyricism and breathing that reveal his beginnings as a trumpeter, just like his father. “I feel a deep connection to the trumpet. It was my first instrument, and at the piano I create melodies with the feeling of a horn player or singer.”

Havana, the album

The album contains nine pieces: spontaneous creations, largely based on original compositions.

Lo Que Tienes Tú opens the album with beautiful melodies tumbling like butterflies around each other. With its clear son montuno foundation, this composition by Maite feels like a warm embrace.

La Mulata Rumbera, by Frank Emilio Flynn, stands out in this version for the deep resonance with which Ramón makes the piano dance and sing, and Maite’s free, exuberant playing.

Johanna, a gift for Ramón’s niece on her 15th birthday, tells the story of a *quinceañera* in piano sounds – from awakening to the party itself, with Maite’s delicious solo capturing the excitement of a 15-year-old girl.

Tributo, Ramón’s homage to Keith Jarrett – his distant mentor and hero – starts lyrically and emotionally, blossoming into a dizzying rhythm in which Maite follows effortlessly.

Havana Morning Light (Ramón Valle) evokes, in 5/4 meter, the magic of a Havana morning: sea, birds, children. Trance-like, a subtle tuning in without fully waking up.

Almendra, by Abelardo Valdes, opens reverently as a classical danzón, growing into a wild dance with Ramón as the driving force around Maite’s elegant playing.

Obsesión (Pedro Flores) surprises with intricate melodic lines around Maite’s mysterious solo. Listeners may catch a quote from a famous bolero.

Odjus Fitchadu (Mayra Andrade, Idan Raichel) is a colourful musical landscape with flavours of fado and flamenco, ending with a magnificent, melodic solo by Maite.

Finally, **Un Porro Con Ramón**, a cheeky track in slow cumbia style – a festive musical conversation and farewell... until next time.

Havana is not a polished studio product, but a soulful listening experience. A musical conversation between two kindred spirits, full of free improvisation and joy, drawing from their rich Latin and Cuban musical heritage. As Maite and Ramón themselves say, it is the naked truth: pure playing born from trust and inspiration. For those who listen with an open heart, you will hear not only their notes, but also their souls.



Concerts

- Sep 19 – Bimhuis – Amsterdam, NL
- Sep 20 – Hot House – Leiden, NL
- Sep 21 – Rumpts Kerkje – Rumpt, NL
- Oct 04 – LUX – Nijmegen, NL
- Oct 11 – Common Ground – Zwolle, NL
- Oct 12 – Jaleo Sound Festival – Amsterdam, NL
- Nov 11 – tba – Freiburg, GER
- Nov 15 – tba – Schwetzingen, GER
- Nov 16 – tba – Darmstadt, GER
- Nov 18 – Theaterstübchen – Kassel, GER
- Nov 29 – Lantaren Venster – Rotterdam, NL
- Dec 20 – TOP Theaterkerk – Bemmelen, NL
- Feb 01 – Kultuurwerkplaats – Oosterbeek, NL

