



## Chick Corea & Touchstone Bio June 2005

### CHICK COREA & TOUCHSTONE

"The quick-changing, ever-evolving pianist-composer is busy fusing another combination of Latin-tinged ingredients with his latest band, Touchstone...they [were] smoking from the get-go." —**VARIETY**

With superstars there's attitude and there's inspiration. Sometimes both at once. With Chick Corea and his Touchstone Quintet the guiding energy is inspiration, a force created by an intense give and take between the jazz giant, Jorge Pardo (flute/sax), Carles Benavent (bass), Rubem Dantas (percussion), and Tom Brechtlein (drums).

This group formed in Madrid as a result of a single performance in 2003 when flamenco great, Paco de Lucia, brought his band to a concert and Chick asked them all to sit in. Paco has collaborated with Chick on various projects in the past, including the 1982 TOUCHSTONE album and tour. At that Madrid concert, though, the connection with the flamenco artists was immediate and positive. Chick, not wanting to let that spirit evaporate, made immediate plans to form a new band called Touchstone.

"I ended my 2003 tour of Europe in Madrid," Chick notes. "My old friend Paco de Lucia came to hear us and I invited him and his band to sit in. Carles, Jorge and Rubem have been key contributors to Paco's music for many years now. And there we all were, having a very good time making music together. This concert ended the tour in a glorious occasion. It was then I decided I wanted to make more of my Touchstone music with these guys."

The subsequent tour of Europe by Chick Corea & Touchstone yielded a new 2-CD set, RHUMBA FLAMENCO: LIVE. One listen and you can hear the great rapport between the players and, when the improvisation kicks in, the performances underscore Variety's remark that the band is "smoking from the get-go."

Chick's new musical compatriots, collectively and individually, had all been deeply involved with Paco de Lucia's expansion of traditional flamenco into a phenomenally successful blend of afro-cuban jazz, bossa nova, and salsa. Their own solo projects have pushed the boundaries even further. With this intense group of like-minded individuals, Chick's new TOUCHSTONE album has taken listeners past all expectations, creating a true world fusion of styles and temperaments.

Within his music, Chick has always used influences taken from his Latin heritage; the first Touchstone project grew out of Corea's need to create a personal album centered around what he calls his "Flamenco heart." But it was at the Madrid performance, and the 2004 tour of Europe with this new Touchstone band when Chick felt he had found the perfect foils for his expansive and innovative compositions. These virtuosos deftly fuse Corea's love of Latin rhythms with elements of classical music, post-bop and, most importantly, duende—the heart and soul of Flamenco—while being able to

spontaneously combust the jazz improvisations from within an emotional core.

Jorge Pardo calls Chick "courageous" for taking on the new Touchstone now. "This is a gift for all of us," Jorge continues; "a chance to learn, Chick also. It is praiseworthy for him to face this challenge at this point in his career. Chick knows perfectly well what he wants from us and it's not precisely for us to know the complete repertoire—there are hundreds of other musicians who'd do that and do that exactly, note-for-note. Chick wants from us what we call our 'blood,' our attitude in facing the music."

The eclectic trio of Pardo, Benavent, and Dantas is rounded out with drummer Tom Brechtlein, a veteran musician whose work with Wayne Shorter, Robben Ford, Al di Meola, and other Chick projects have gained him due respect in jazz circles.

In March of this year, Touchstone played some warm-up dates at the venerated Catalina's in Los Angeles. Richard Ginell of Variety caught the first night and urged his readers to see the group as soon as possible. "It's a fascinating stew almost by definition," he wrote. "But what made it really special was the strong material—often retooled from earlier Corea projects... Best of all were the encores, a disarmingly lovely dialogue between Corea's right hand and Danta's kalimba, followed by an excursion that revived and revamped the breezy grooves of Corea's Return to Forever Band."

Chick Corea & Touchstone will start their world tour at the JVC Jazz Festival in June of 2005. Their latest release, RHUMBA FLAMENCO: LIVE IN EUROPE, is a limited edition 2CD set available only through [www.chickcorea.com](http://www.chickcorea.com) and at concerts.

## **CHICK COREA**

Pianist Chick Corea has been making music most of his life. Chick was born Armando Anthony Corea on June 12th, 1941 in Chelsea, Massachusetts to Armando and Anna Corea. His father was one of Boston's hottest jazz band leaders and young Chick got his start accompanying his dad. After high school Corea moved to New York and after short period at Julliard, began playing on the New York jazz scene. Early stints with Sarah Vaughn, Willie Bobo, and Mongo Santamaria, gave Chick plenty of exposure to Latin music and Afro-Cuban rhythms. It wasn't long before Chick was an in-demand sideman performing with Stan Getz, Blue Mitchell and others.

In 1968, Miles Davis announced that Herbie Hancock was leaving his band. Chick got the call to join Miles. That's when he was first exposed to the electric piano. Miles was conceiving of a new electric sound and insisted Chick plug in. At first Chick was reluctant to play what he thought was an inferior instrument, but he soon discovered it had wonderful possibilities. After playing on such seminal albums as *IN A SILENT WAY* and *BITCHES BREW*, Corea went in another direction; free jazz with a group called Circle.

But soon after, he was once again playing electric piano and eventually became a one of its most visible proponents and a pioneer on other keyboard instruments that were being created in the 1970s. With his new group, *Return to Forever*, Chick and his band turned up the volume with compositions that were complex, dynamic, electric mini-symphonies thrilling audiences worldwide with their mind-blowing articulation and dexterity. A short time later, Chick began incorporating strings, horns, and even vocals into *Return to Forever* and subsequent groups.

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's he effortlessly shifted back and forth from acoustic to electric settings always surprising his fans with something new including an original piano concerto. Of course it was during this period when Chick debuted the Chick Corea Elektric Band introducing to fans a group of young virtuosos who themselves have carved out fine careers.

Chick Corea never stays in one place very long. He is constantly searching for fresh sounds and taking on new challenges. Most recently, his band Origin has created a significant volume of critically acclaimed music. With 14 Grammy Awards to his credit, he shows no sign of slowing. In fact, Corea, now in his mid-60's, seems more prolific than ever with a new Elektric Band CD called TO THE STARS based on the 1940's L. Ron Hubbard space epic of the same name, as well as RHUMBA FLAMENCO: LIVE IN EUROPE with Touchstone. With each project he continues to inspire generations of young composers, musicians and fans worldwide and add to his already stunning musical legacy.

## **TOM BRECHTLEIN**

Tom is a wonderfully innovative drummer with a crisp and exciting sound that perfectly suits Chick Corea's Touchstone band. He both drives the band and floats on top of the music creating gorgeous rhythmic textures.

Corea was one of Brechtlein's musical heroes growing up in East Meadow, Long Island. He caught Return to Forever playing on a PBS special and knew someday he would play with him. Of course, most musicians had an entry point into the fusion sound of the 1970s. For Tom it was The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Cream, and Jimi Hendrix. The progression seemed natural from the electric juggernaut of the late 60's Woodstock era into the Miles Davis BITCHES BREW period. But that transition was interspersed with hearing modern jazz drummers like Joe Morello, Elvin Jones, Max Roach, and Tony Williams.

Brechtlein's prophecy came true. Nearly two years after he first saw Corea's PBS appearance, he auditioned with him and got the gig. He remained with Corea until 1983 appearing on several recordings and playing with him around the world. Next, another jazz giant Wayne Shorter enlisted Tom's services which was followed by extensive touring time with guitar wizard Al Di Meola and violin master Jean Luc Ponty. In 1986 Tom joined guitarist Robben Ford and the two collaborated on many musical adventures.

Now Tom is back playing the music of Chick Corea and Touchstone, adding his signature sound to this breathtaking new group.

## **CARLES BENAVENT**

Bass player Carles Benavent, was born in the Poble Sec neighborhood in Barcelona, Spain. His earliest days playing music were in blues/rock groups at the age of fourteen. Essentially self-taught, Carles benefited from being in the midst of the surging musical environment in Barcelona of the 1960s. It wasn't long before he formed the fusion band Música Urbana, along with keyboard player Joan Albert Amargós, recording two albums. After that group broke up, he began to play and record with guitar virtuoso Paco de Lucia in 1978. It was the starting point of a continuous musical relationship between both musicians that lasts to this day.

1991 proved to be a high point for Carles when he performed with Miles Davis in one of the music legend's very last concerts in Montreux, Switzerland. His lowest low was hit in 1995 when Carles suffered a serious accident that caused great damage to his left arm. However, he was determined to return to playing music. With hard work he recovered and for the past ten years hasn't skipped a beat playing all over the globe in many different contexts with musicians like Al Di Meola, Peter Erskine, and many others.

Carles Benavent's has an unmistakably distinct sound. He is considered by many to be among the finest, most complete bass players in the world. Musicians and fans alike can hear his outstanding playing in a variety of settings including his work with Paco De Lucia, his own solo recordings, and of course with Chick Corea and Touchstone.

## **RUBEM DANTAS**

Rubem was born into a musical family in Salvador de Bahia. His earliest exposure to music was studying piano with his mother. His interest soon turned to percussion and his journey took him on a path that would have him mentioned in the same breath as all the great maestros. It was with Vahindo do Gantois, whom Rubem considers his master, where it all began, playing some of the most important festivals in Brazil.

In 1977 his move to Madrid afforded him the opportunity to play with other wonderful musicians and be in the middle of the growing new flamenco movement. Pedro Rui Blas invited Rubem to join the group Dolores and it was in that group where he met Jesus Pardo, Alaro Yebeles and Jorge Pardo.

During this time he crossed paths with guitar legend Paco de Lucia. The two formed what was one of the most influential and innovative new flamenco bands in the world. They toured extensively with Carles Benevent, Ramon de Algeciras, Joaquin Girto, Duquende, Jorge Pardo, and Jose Bandera. While in Peru, Rubem discovered the native percussion instrument, the Cajon. He felt it could add a new dimension to the already pioneering flamenco sound he was helping create.

Rubem Dantas is one of the most in-demand musicians anywhere and his credits seem endless recording or performing with artists like Vince Mendoza, Gilberto Gil, Paquito D'Rivera and many more. Now add Chick Corea and Touchstone to a list that grows with each passing year.

## **JORGE PARDO**

Jorge Pardo was born in Madrid in 1955. He started his studies at the Conservatory of Madrid at the age of 14. From very early on in his career he immersed himself in jazz and was one of the founding members of the group Dolores (together with Pedro Ruy-Blas). Today, Jorge is regarded as one of the true leaders of a style of music that fuses flamenco with jazz. In fact, he is among the elite group of jazz figures from Spain with an international following.

Introduced to the world of professional flamenco at the hands of Paco de Lucia, he has acquired a new hybrid language between jazz "de raiz" ("from the roots") and flamenco. His style and technique on both flute and the sax is blazing new trails in this constantly developing music. In addition to his work in SEXTETO by Paco de Lucia, he has collaborated with nearly every major figure in the world of flamenco; his resume includes concerts with Chick Corea and Astrid Gilberto and Jorge is also a longtime collaborator with the rocking flamenco unit, Ketama and La Barberia del Sur, further exploring the outer reaches of the rhythms of flamenco.

Now, Jorge Pardo is a once again lending his uncanny musicianship to Touchstone, inspiring listeners everywhere.