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ALAN SEALES: Hello, everyone. I'm Alan, bringing you this latest episode of the "Talks at Google" podcast. "Talks at Google" brings the world's most influential thinkers, creators, makers, and doers all to one place. Every episode of this podcast is taken from a video that can be seen at [YouTube.com/TalksAtGoogle](https://www.youtube.com/TalksAtGoogle). This episode features a performance and Q&A with CimaFunk, currently one of the world's hottest rising bands. Bringing the funk to Cuban rhythms and vice versa, CimaFunk embraces the pleasantly stimulating playfulness of timeless Cuban music combined with 21st century style. Referencing timba as well as trova and continuing where '90s cult band Herba Buena left off, CimaFunk, who was by all accounts Cuba's 2018 revelation of the year, is poised for international discovery. Visit [CimaFunk.com](https://www.CimaFunk.com) for more info.

[00:00:56]

In this event, in addition to discussing their latest album "Terapia," they also converse about the emerging creative class in Cuba and the role of expanded internet access. In conversation with Brett Perlmutter, head of Google Cuba, here is CimaFunk, a new generation of Cuban music.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: You may want to unbutton a button. You may want to put on some shades. 'Cause it's time to calentar.

[00:01:31]

CIMAFUNK: [singing Spanish]

[00:05:06]

CIMAFUNK: Yes, thank you. Thank you for the invitation. It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for came. [singing Spanish].

[00:11:40]

CIMAFUNK: We are pulling all together and see the people reaction. [singing Spanish]

[00:17:15]

CIMAFUNK: Thank you. Gracias.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Can we do another applause for CimaFunk?

CIMAFUNK: Wow.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So my first question is something everyone is wondering in the room. How do you move your legs like that? Have you always been able to do that?

CIMAFUNK: No. I don't know. I don't know. It just happens. It just happened one day. I asked myself, "It could be nice if you can sing and dance, so try," and it work.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: What day was that?

CIMAFUNK: I don't remember. It was a long time ago.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: It's when you were young.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, I worked in a cruise ship for eight months, so it's like show stuff, you have to make a show there, so I start to say, "Okay, maybe I can dance and sing now, so it could be nice for the show."

[00:18:01]

BRETT PERLMUTTER: It's pretty good. Well, tell us about the name "CimaFunk." Where does it come from?

CIMAFUNK: Well, the name "Cima," Cima is--It come from the word "Cimarrón." Cimarrón, I say that in English, it called [indistinct]. What's a slave who's came from the house of the master and start to live in the [indistinct]. In Cuba, we call them "Cimarrón," so I always feel identify with that because for my family was, like, a Nigerian guy who came in the forest of [indistinct], and he was a slave also and stuff, so the history and the files say that he was a slave and he came from Nigeria, so I figure out that, and I feel very identify with this kilter and also because the Afro-Cuban kilter, all the rhythm, all the stuff, of the African people who bring this to our country. So I take "Cima" from "Cimarrón," and "Funk" for the music, for the style, for the visuality, for funk.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Unbelievable.

[00:18:59]

So you have been compared to the James Brown of Cuba.

CIMAFUNK: Hey, no, no, no. This is not right. No, it's too much. It's too much. I'm just learning the stuff, you know? This is too--It's too hard being that.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: I mean, nevertheless, you're doing big things. You were reviewed by New Yorker Magazine. One reviewer called you like a mix between Missy Elliot and [indistinct] infused with a strong dose of Caribbean flavor.

CIMAFUNK: That's crazy with that.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Well--Are these people nuts? I mean, we just heard it.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah. No, people--You know, everybody feel the same in the way that--in their own way. I don't know. I'm just--I'm recycling the music, the style, and putting a little bit of myself. But I'm using the stuff that they already done. I love James Brown. I love [indistinct]. I love--And I have a lot of reference from music from United States. I really love all the old times, and I like taking things from there and putting my stuff with my Cuban sing on it. It's very--

[00:20:00]

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So who are your points of references? Who are your musical influences?

CIMAFUNK: I hear a lot, since I was a child, to Lionel Richie. So my uncle give me a set of Michael Jackson also, the album "Invincible," and after I start to follow the music from U.S., Ohio Players, Funkadelic, James Brown of course, Marvin Gaye, Prince, Sonny Boy, all the--A lot of all people, all [indistinct] and also some of they've, and I'm from Cuba and all this, like a huge [indistinct] from Cuba of [indistinct], everybody. Everybody in Cuba is a lot of [indistinct] still working, have been like teacher for many people. And like, this is like many musicians that I listen every day, some of them new.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So it's truly Afro-Cuban funk.

[00:20:52]

CIMAFUNK: Yeah. I think so. I think so. Hey, when the people ask you for a style of music, I say "Afro-Cuban" because the Africa and Cuba and stuff and funk because it's a mix of that. But at the end, it's music is groove. It's groove.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Amazing. So we're here in Google, so I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the internet a little bit.

CIMAFUNK: Uh-huh.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So in Cuba, we're witnessing an amazing step change in access to the internet. Before there was this amount of internet access in Cuba, how did you share your music? How did you distribute it?

CIMAFUNK: Before?

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Before.

CIMAFUNK: Well, before that, I was in, like, making a lot of campaigns, so I was more calm. But before that, it's a [indistinct] in television, you know, in the TV and the radio, but it was a little bit more hard, you know? We have something called the [indistinct], it's a platform that the people use for share music, and you have a lot of information, and you

go and you copy all this information. The people have, like, many houses when they give you this information to the town, to the crowd.

[00:22:00]

And that's the most viable way to share the information before the internet. And now-- also now, also work like a super good. But now definitely what a change. It's a big change when we start to get access to the internet. For me especially it was like a huge difference.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So you had the [indistinct], which is like an offline internet, and now you have internet access that's becoming more ubiquitous.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: It's becoming cheaper and more accessible. Here in Google, we had put servers in Cuba, which came live in 2017, that made platforms like YouTube available there.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah. That's great. That's great. That's great. And it's--We're fast already. We're more fast than--Well, before it was impossible getting there. Now it's like it's working. It's working.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So it's working. Okay, that's good.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, that's what we need.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: We're gonna tell the engineers.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Say congratulations to the engineers. Thank you.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So how do you share your music now?

[00:23:00]

CIMAFUNK: I share from both sides. I share the analogic way that is the [indistinct], and I share for the internet. But now it's amazing because before, the most part of the crowd to follow the audience to follow CimaFunk when I start was from outside of Cuba because I released the album in Paris, and I made all the campaign there. But now it's like 90% of the people are from Cuba who follow CimaFunk, and it's in the network. It's in the internet what I make in everything, almost everything now, all the posts, all the information of the concert, all the joke, everything. I post them, and I have the most part of the crowd is from Cuba. That's--That's what I was telling you. That's something new. That's something new.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So you're digital audience is in Cuba?

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, the most part of them. Yeah. The people is crazy with that. The people get connection, and it's like fulltime. Fulltime they always trying to find a way to be connected to the internet, and it's good because I'm doing the same, so I'm making information and putting information all the time.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: That's fabulous.

[00:24:00]

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, it's great. It's great. It's been a good change.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Yeah. So in many ways in Cuba, and I know you're very humble, but I've gone to concerts where you're selling out, there are tens of thousands of people crammed to see you, and really you're becoming, or your sound is becoming, a bit of the sound of this new generation of creatives in Cuba, and we had the opportunity to collaborate in a fashion show with Clandestina.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah. It was great.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: And you opened for the fashion show. How do you collaborate with other creatives in Cuba?

CIMAFUNK: Well, now we are making the--For example, for all the visual content, I work with many designers, now especially with [indistinct]. She have great hand for all these things, so she's a creative, and she's given me the chance to work with her.

[00:24:56]

And for the visuals, [indistinct] people from audio visual, we are working together with Clandestina also, and they've made me some customs and we--Now it's a movement of trying to be all together, trying to put this thing better. It's the only way we stay together. In my generation now, that is the feeling in Cuba is the feeling of the people are gonna stay here, are gonna try to improve especially the arts, and now we [indistinct] you should know it's madness there. It's like most young than ever. There's more people from my generation than ever before.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: This is the art biennial?

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, the art biennial [indistinct].

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Amazing.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, it's crazy now.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So if we were to hop over to the United States, how has your time here--Is this your first tour in the United States? That's right?

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, it's my first tour.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: And how's it going?

CIMAFUNK: Great. Great. It's great. Everywhere that we arrive, the people receive us with really kindness, and they give us all the time everything, and we have been in places really special for us.

[00:26:01]

Example, this is super special to be here, and [indistinct], so we was playing in [indistinct] and in Washington we play in Tropicalia. It's like places when the people--When the people enjoy in places with history and stuff, so have been great. Have been great. All the [indistinct] through all the people in the music industry is amazing.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Fabulous. That's great. And tell us about your concert in Miami. So historically going to Miami has a certain significance.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, because it's everybody there is Cuba. It's Cuba. It's Cuba. Miami's like a lot of people from Cuba, and they was waiting for a music for many time, and they was, like, getting crazy in the network like, "You have to come. You have to come." So when we arrive, it was like madness there. That was a crazy day.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: It was sold out.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sold out. Sold out. It was crazy. The people was crazy and--I don't know. It was 12:00 a.m. and it was kids, you know, getting to the stage. I was like, "Okay. Crazy." Crazy day.

[00:27:03]

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Sounds fabulous. Sounds like you'll remember it for a long time.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, yeah. Definitely. Now we're gonna come back now in May. we're gonna come back in May again.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Great. Great. So what are--What is one thing that the world should know about Cuba and Cuban music?

CIMAFUNK: Well, I think that's many, many things. I'm super proud of [indistinct] Cuba, and I'm super proud of the legacy of the music in Cuba. And I think that the people should know that we are, that my generation is getting now more in touch with the past

and with things that the Cuban music have done for the universe of music. And it's great. It's great that the people can know the importance of the Cuban music and the actual music in the hip hop, in the funk, in the [indistinct], in many, many music style.

[00:27:58]

Even in the rock, if you hear Pachito in Afro-Cuban, it was one of the first big bands to arrive to here. And you hear the Mambos of Pachito, and after you hear some [indistinct] from those beats, 20 years later and you see that in the same line, so like Cuba have been there from since many time ago, and it's important for us try to put this in the mind of the [indistinct]. It's more than reggaeton. It's more than timba. It's many, many music styles that born the country and get transformed in other stuff.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: That's great. Well, I think the audience wants to ask a few questions, but before they do I have a surprise for you. I didn't tell you I was gonna do this. We're gonna play a game. It's--It's a game of free association. It's very simple. So I'm gonna say one word or one phrase, and then you're gonna tell me the first thing that comes to your mind in one word or one phrase, okay?

CIMAFUNK: Easy words?

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Easy words.

CIMAFUNK: Okay, okay.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Okay. Okay, the first one is "Pinar del Rio."

[00:29:00]

CIMAFUNK: My home.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: "Internet."

CIMAFUNK: Thanks.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: "Cimarrón."

CIMAFUNK: My home also.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: "Collin Loughery."

CIMAFUNK: My friend.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: "Terapia."

CIMAFUNK: My album.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: "James Brown."

CIMAFUNK: Godfather of Soul.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: "[indistinct]."

CIMAFUNK: People getting crazy.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Well, with that, let's have the craziness continue. Thank you so much.

CIMAFUNK: Thanks to you, man. That's fine, man. This is a song from the album "Terapia" called "Paciente." [singing Spanish]

[00:34:58]

CIMAFUNK: We're gonna change the scene. It's called [indistinct]. It means also that we are doing [indistinct]. [singing Spanish]

[00:44:15]

CIMAFUNK: Thank you. [singing Spanish]

[00:48:58]

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Let's give it up for CimaFunk!

CIMAFUNK: [singing Spanish]

[00:49:59]

Thank you. [singing Spanish] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for coming. Thank you.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Okay. We have a question on this side. [indistinct]?

person: I saw y'all in the dining hall, and I said, "They're too cool to work here," and I was right. I was right. Tremendous. I feel like I want to watch the movie that you guys would be the soundtrack to. That's where my brain went. I'm very curious about the effect that your rise as a style, as a group, is having on dance culture in Cuba, because as a student of Salsa myself, I saw several continents moving in the legs on stage, and I wonder how's that translating now.

[00:51:02]

You mention with the arrival of internet and the fact that the people can see more of you, what effect that's having on dance culture?

CIMAFUNK: Bueno. This is a [indistinct] that is positive because normally the people in Cuba dance more Salsa is what we used to do normally, Salsa or reggaeton. Sometimes some dance halls, some stuff like that, but never something like this now. But the thing is that the people now, they don't ask what we are playing. When they feel it, they move when they are dancing. So when the people start to realize a couple months ago that was all the music and they could dance that, then it was like a more intense, and they start to communicate with us and say, "Okay, man, we can dance with you, so we go to the concert. If we want to dance, we go to the concert of CimaFunk. It's not Salsa. It's not reggaeton. But we can dance." Always it's positive. 100%. Thank you.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: We have a question over here. Steve?

[00:51:57]

STEVE: Sure. Yeah. I noticed--I couldn't help but notice at the end of this set, you know, while Brett was on stage with you, maybe his talents could best be used outside of here if you have an opening, you know, for CimaFunk.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: If I could be one of your backup dancers?

CIMAFUNK: Oh, man, definitely, bro.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: All right.

CIMAFUNK: He's dancer also.

STEVE: I noticed the same. I was thinking the same.

CIMAFUNK: Maybe if you want, tomorrow we will play in a [indistinct], so tomorrow everybody's invited, and you can come to the stage, and you can do whatever you feel. You want to dance? You want to play something? The stage tomorrow is for everybody. So you invited, man, if you want to go.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: With his endorsement, I'll take it.

person: I'm wondering how you picked the band, how that kind of came together.

CIMAFUNK: Normally I put a [indistinct] with more--How can I say?--all people, because I don't know music. I just make by hear. I make the thing. I record with the voice, and sometime the musician came and they put more in that. But at the beginning, I start to work with other musicians.

[00:53:00]

But we didn't get the good communication because it was, like, too much music, and I couldn't find a way to transmit what I was trying to do, so I take--I think of maybe one year, like, putting the musicians together, and I chose, like, the new guys in the media and the musical environment in Cuba. So we start to talk. We start to get communication, and finally we understand, and we start to groove together. It was a crazy process. We try six bass players. Yeah, it was crazy, but at the end we found the right people. Yeah. Same to you.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: So it was a much easier process for me to become one of your dancers?

CIMAFUNK: No, no, no. Don't worry. Don't worry. You can dance. You can dance. If you feel it, you can dance.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Who knew? All right.

person: Yes, hi. I heard that you were gonna be a medical student, or you were?

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

person: What happened?

[00:53:59]

CIMAFUNK: Yeah, music. Music, music, music. Because when I was in school, I start to make music. And when I arrive to the capital, I was living in the outside of the countryside. When I went to the capital and I saw what was happening there with the music environment, I just decide to quick move, and I do. I finished the--I stop the school and I went right to Havana and start to find a way to improve myself in music.

person: And I will see you in Havana in July.

CIMAFUNK: Yeah. Definitely. Definitely. Definitely. Same to you.

BRETT PERLMUTTER: Okay, so let's do one final applause for CimaFunk. Thank you. [speaking Spanish].

[00:54:53]

ALAN SEALES: Thanks for listening. If you have any feedback about this or any other episode, we'd love to hear from you. You can visit G.go/TalksAtGoogle/podcastfeedback to leave your comments. And to discover more amazing content, you can always find us at YouTube.com/TalksAtGoogle or through our Twitter handle @GoogleTalks. Thanks for listening. Talk soon.