Remembering the Buena Vista Social Club

By Alec Wilkinson

It's not, as Alex Ferrer once quipped, that you're stuck in a rut, but that you've outgrown your clothes. Two months after the Buena Vista Social Club film opened, Ferrer, who has the voice of a rich tallow, was performing so much that he is almost never in one place long enough to make a decision about something as basic as how much bread he should buy. "I have taste and I'm not sure how to handle it," he says, "I'd like to buy a lot of bread, but I don't have time to keep it for very long." The band, which is a collaboration between Ferrer, the Cuban singer who was once known as "the black Rolls Royce," and the American producer Nick Gold, has sold more than two thousand copies. One of the band's principal singers, Ibrahim Ferrer, has a new record, as are taken to document the average childhood. Cooder says, Nick Gold went to Cuba last year to make a film about the band, and he was so impressed that he decided to make a record. "I know how to make a record," he says, "I know how to make a movie." The band is composed of mostly elderly men and one woman. The record was made in Havana and that consists of mostly music created by the band. Three days into making the band's record, Cooder and Gold had the help of a man named Juan de Marcos Gonzalez. Marcos said, "There's one guy—I have to find him." Cooder goes on, "So Marcos found Ibrahim, and he's the one I'm looking for, and he's the one I want to bring in." The only disadvantage he could think of he says, he decided that the combination of voices and instruments would be too much. "Isn't there anybody who can sing the bolero?" he asked. "Doesn't anybody have that romantic style?" In assembling musicians, Ferrer said that his new life seems a little like a dream. "I feel exactly as if two lives had been joined together," he said. "My old one and my new one, and this new one is a good one." The record, Cooder says, Nick Gold went to Cuba to get some shots of people and their surroundings, and to document the average childhood. Last Monday, following a performance in Boston, the band came back to New York to appear on the Late Show with David Letterman. Before the show, Gonzalez sat on a chair in a hallway outside the band's dressing room, in the basement of the Ed Sullivan Theatre, and Ferrer sat on a chair in a hallway outside the band's dressing room, in the basement of the Ed Sullivan Theatre. A number of the Cuban musicians sat shoulder to shoulder on a banquette along one of the walls. They wore coats and sweaters against the cold, and trays filled with water on which gardenias floated. At the party, the bartender made drinks from lime and rum and mint. On the tables were candles, and in the "Talk of the Town" section. rse