

# *“Los Van Van is Our Homeland” opened first International Timba Festival*

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Havana, August 4 (RHC) – The exhibition “Los Van Van is Our Homeland” by photographer Iván Soca opened the International Timba Festival “Forever Formell” on Friday.

At the Cuban capital’s El Sauce Cultural Center, the exhibition’s opening coincided with the 77th birthday of the late Juan Formell, who passed away 5 years ago. “Los Van Van is Our Homeland” is part of the festival dedicated to pay tribute to the director of Los Van Van, one of Cuba’s most important orchestras.

Upon opening the festival and exhibition, Samuel Formell, the late musician’s son and the band’s current director, said his father was a happy and simple person, and following his example has always been the key to the orchestra’s success. On hand were all of Juan Formell’s children, including Juan Carlos, Samuel, Eliza and Vanesa, who spoke of their father beyond the band, highlighting how Los Van Van and the musical atmosphere in which they were raised influenced their lives. Three of them, Juan Carlos, Samuel and Vanesa, are currently orchestra members. A workshop was held to value the band’s impact on the Cuban people and popular Cuban dancing music and how Los Van Van has defended the island’s music roots worldwide and managed to keep its identity for over 50 years. The documentary “Legacy”

showcasing Juan Formell's life and work and contribution to Cuban music was screened later.

Cuban Art University's Juan Formell Department is set to award the winners of the Habana Sí popular music competition that has also been underway as part of the festival. On Monday Formell and Los Van Van are set to perform on the famous Havana intersection of 23rd and O to close the cultural gathering, which also celebrates the 500th anniversary of establishment of Havana and the band's 50th birthday.

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