

Van Van director and founder, Juan Formell, dies



Renowned Cuban musician, Juan Formell, who founded and directed the legendary band Los Van Van for more than four decades, passed away in Havana on Thursday.

Director, bassist, arranger, composer, singer and album producer, Formell was born in the Cuban capital on August 2nd, 1942. His father, flautist, pianist and arranger, Francisco Formell, was his first music teacher, but he later continued his music studies as a self-taught musician.

He began his professional artistic career as a music arranger and composer in 1965 when outstanding Cuban singer Elena Burke included some of his tunes in an album. He continued as a bassist, composer and arranger at the Revé band, where he started experimenting with some musical instruments not included in popular Cuban music orchestras at that time. However, Los Van Van was his master piece. He founded the band in 1969, appearing on the Cuban cultural scene with a different melodic line. Four decades later, and with nearly 30 albums, the group is still Cuba's most popular band.

In November, 2013, Formell was presented a Latin Grammy for Musical Excellence, and in 1999 a Grammy Award for his album *Llegó... Van Van* (Van Van is here) and several other nominations in other editions.



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