

## Francisco Aguabella - H2O (1999)

Written by bluelover

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1 *Short Story* 3:30 2 *Quien Eres Tu* 5:12 3 *Wood Place* 4:24 4 *Nena* 4:57 5 *Cavalié* 3:18 6 *Son To Any Kid* 4:55 7 *Intensity* 4:02 8 *Vencido* 4:31 9 *Caito* 4:46 10 *Danzonete* 4:56  
Bongos – David Romero Congas, Percussion – Francisco Aguabella Double Bass – Jonathan Pintoff Drums – Ed Smith Lead Vocals – Nengue Hernandez Piano – Joe Rotondi Jr. Saxophone – Charles Owens Trombone – Dan Weinstein Trumpet – Luis Gonzalez

There is no shortage of conguero-led Afro-Cuban and Latin jazz groups in the world. With so many household names like Poncho Sanchez and Ray Barretto to choose from, why stop and take notice of the slightly below the radar Francisco Aguabella? All questions will be answered and doubt will disappear at the first listen to 1999's H2O. While other percussionist/bandleaders have their roots firmly in the mambo dance craze of the '50s and '60s, Aguabella's music is born of rumba. The difference is palpable. From his distinct, clear, sharp tone to his enigmatic, quinto-driven phrasing, Francisco, though a staple of the New York scene for many decades, never left Havana. Producer Orlando "Cachaito" Lopez, a Latin jazz headliner himself, managed to capture the raw, no-frills energy of Aguabella's style on H2O beautifully. Sonically, the record has the closeness and intensity of first-row seats in a small, smoky club. Stylistically a little less folkloric than Francisco's first release, *Agua de Cuba*, there's a dance sensibility that drives the record. The arrangements are plenty jazzy, but without losing the visceral punch that so many bandleaders sacrifice. The selections with vocals are definitely salsa, but without being homogenized or slick, maintaining the funky quality so often sacrificed in preference toward shiny production. If there is such a thing, Aguabella is both the modern master and original gangster of Afro-Cuban music. ---Evan C. Gutierrez, AllMusic Review

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