



Columns

FEBRUARY 2011 ISSUE

QUÉ PASA IN L.A.?

By Rudy Mangual

The 2010 holiday season in Los Angeles was a total blast, with celebrations that featured everything from salsa, bachata and flamenco, to disco and reggaetón. Highlights included Los Van Van's Conga Room performances (on December 15th and 16th) and a New Year's Eve Party on December 31st, featuring the salsa diva known as India.

KXLU 88.9 FM
LOS ANGELES



ALMA



DEL



BARRIO



Costa Azul, a local group led by brothers Freddy and Johnny Crespo returned to Alma del Barrio (L.A.'s number one salsa/Latin jazz program, transmitted through KXLU-FM 88.9 and currently celebrating its 36th anniversary) for a live presentation on Sunday, January 2nd, 2011. Costazul's performance was enhanced by the participation of guest musicians such as Johnny Polanco, Artie Webb, Arturo Velazco, Joey de León, Papo Rodríguez, Francisco Torres, Ileana García, Eddie Resto and Dennis Jirón, among others. The broadcast of this live performance was organized by Alma del Barrio DJs Guido Herrera, Rosalba Lara and Lily Regalado, plus guest DJ Allen Geik. The band, powered by four amazing trombones and a solid rhythm section (reforced by Johnny Polanco on tres, Artie Webb on flute, and Freddy and Johnny Crespo on lead vocals) delivered a high-octane set of classic salsa tunes. Standouts included the selections *Isla del Encanto*, *No Critiques*, and *Mujer Sandunguera*. We thank Costazul and all the musicians that were a part of this live event, as well as all the DJs of Alma del Barrio that made it possible.

Bobby Matos and his Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble (with special guest Poncho Sánchez) performed at the Radisson Hotel's Jazz Club in Culver City on Friday, January 15th to an appreciative crowd, while El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico took the stage of the Conga Room on January 27th, continuing a solid live musical beginning of 2011 in the City of Angels.

Upcoming events around town: The Annual Valentine Salsa Dance on February 12th, at West Covina's American Legion Post 790, featuring Phil Robinson y la Sonora Borinqueña.

Arturo Sandoval and his Latin Big Band will be performing on February 12th during a free concert conducted at the Seaside Park in the city of Ventura.

The Annual Los Angeles Brazilian Carnaval "Exotica" will be held on March 5th at Club Nokia's L.A. Live in Downtown Los Angeles. Headlining this year's carnival will be Andrea Ferraz, Carla Hassett, Carlinhos Pandeiro de Ouro, Chalo Eduardo, Erock dos Santos, Flavio Ribeiro, Katia Moraes, and Leo Costa, among many others.

Ballet Folclorico da Bahia will visit our city on March 12th, when said troupe will perform at the Wilshire Ebell Theater.

Colombian superstar **Juanes** will be performing on March 13th at the Staples Center's L.A. Live in Downtown Los Angeles.

The Annual Los Angeles Salsa Congress is scheduled to take place from May 27 to 29 at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles. Headlining this year's event will be Chino Espinoza & Los Dueños del Son on May 26th (for the Pre-Congress party); Víctor Manuelle and his orchestra (directly from Puerto Rico) on Friday, May 27th; Grupo Latin Vibe (directly from New York City) on Saturday, May 28th; and La Sorpresa (bachata band) at The Bachata Room, plus Johnny Polanco y su Conjunto Amistad, along with special guest Choco Orta, on Sunday, May 29, 2011. For tickets and reservations, visit www.atevents.com.

Continue supporting all your local musicians, venues, and events. Peace.



A Bite from the Apple

By Vicki Solá

Vocalist **Frankie Morales** presents the CD entitled *No Te Equivoques, Es Frankie Morales* (*Don't Be Mistaken, it's Frankie Morales*). Backed by his tight, heavy-duty band, which includes some of New York's finest sidemen plus special guests (Willie Alvarez, Chino Nuñez, Máximo Rodríguez, Desmar Guevara, Jorge Castro, Eddie Montalvo, Luis Cruz, Hermán Olivera, Yoko, Luisito Ayala, Sammy González, and Frankie Boy), Morales delivers a repertoire penned by composers such as Noel Vargas, Gilberto Velásquez, and Miguel Angel Amadeo. Arrangements were contributed by Ray Santos, Willie Ruiz, Chino Núñez, and Tommy Villariny. Morales will have you wearing out your shoes as he displays a firestorm of sheer swing, imprinted with his own unmistakable style. You can catch him, along with special guest Adalberto Santiago, on February 20th at Sidestreet (in the Bronx), celebrating the CD's release.



José Raúl "Lips" Morales' *Tumbaito y Trompeta* is one of the most refreshingly original productions I've heard. Elaborated with deep respect for Latin music's traditions, the appeal of these tracks —from sizzling numbers tailored to the dancer to elegant boleros to street pregones that bring back childhood memories — is truly timeless.

Morales performed his debut in Carnegie Hall at the age of ten, and his budding career was guided by his father, member of Quique Lucca's Conjunto Internacional —the noteworthy trumpet-playing arranger Israel "Isy" Morales.



The younger Morales, also known as "Cheo," "Little Man" and "Lips" (the latter nickname was earned as a result of the buzzing sound he produced as he developed his embouchure), went on to become a member of his father's South Bronx-based Orquesta Guarionex, a band that opened for such legends as the Machito Orchestra, Sonora Matancera, and Pete "El Conde" Rodriguez, as it worked its way through the "cuchifrito circuit." When the elder Morales left to care for his ill wife, the group became known as the José Raúl Morales Orchestra, featuring vocalists Hermán Olivera, Luis Acevedo, and Eddy Valdés, plus core musicians Jorge González (of Rubén Blades and Spanish Harlem Orchestra fame), Héctor Torres, René Leyva, Tom Brown, Chino Moreno, Eddie Muñiz and Wilmor Vega.

After the orchestra's recording label folded, Morales freelanced, working with Cholo Rivera's Conjunto, Ray Jay's orchestra, the Tony Cofresí All-Stars, Los Hermanos Colón, The Salsa Machine, Marvin Santiago, Ismael Miranda, Paquito Guzmán, Luisito Carrion, Héctor Tricoché, Adalberto Santiago, Nino Segarra, Pedro Conga and Rey Ruiz.

The soulful and smooth trumpeter, who considers himself a student to this day, also studied jazz at Long Island University and at the Kaufman Center for Jazz with Roni Ben-Hur. Here he is now, presenting what he describes in his words, "never released recordings of yesterday and today" —all father/son arrangements, combining the skills and experience of two generations and featuring vocalists Olivera and Valdés.

In my humble opinion, *Tumbaito y Trompeta* belongs in every serious Latin music aficionado's collection!

DJ Jeff's "Hot Pick of the Month": Sonora Ponceña's *Te Lo Buscaste*.

It is with deep sadness that I report the death of flutist **Eddie Perales** this past December in Puerto Rico. Latin Beat extends its condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues.

Born in 1961 in New York City, Perales studied at the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico, earning first prize in the Miguel Besosa Flute Competition. He cited Herbie Mann, Hubert Laws, José Fajardo and Johnny Pacheco as his earliest influences, and he also loved classical music, particularly the recordings of Jean Pierre Rampal and James Galaway.

Perales performed with Gary Núñez's Molinedo Vidrio and with Tauné (another group that belonged to the nueva trova movement). He taught at Puerto Rico's Conservatory of Music and at the island's Escuela Libre de Música. I remember him best when he played in Fajardo's band (after its legendary leader's demise) and when he worked with SonSublime and Sonido Ideal.

Around town... Latin Sundays continue at The Whiskey Café in Lyndhurst, New Jersey, featuring the following acts: Charangueando Con Tipica'73 (Feb. 27), Grupo Latin Vibe (March 27), and Larry Umana y su Son Pequeño (April 24).

"Salsa Mágica: The First Salsa Magic Show" takes place on February 19th at the Paradise Theater in the Bronx, featuring the Mambo Legends Orchestra, José Alberto (El Canario), Jerry Hernández y la Orquesta Dee Jay, Los Hermanos Colón, Brian Michael, Tony Pastrana, René Delgadillo, and Tessa Cecilia.

Established by Tito Puente, the Harbor Conservatory's 21st Annual Competition for the Charlie Palmieri Piano Scholarship, for pianists aged 12-25, is slated for February 19. Sonny Bravo will be serving as a juror. "The scholarship," according to Nina Olson, "enables young pianists to study at the Harbor Conservatory, free of cost, for an entire year. It represents Tito's great respect for Charlie Palmieri's artistry, and his concern for Latin music education." Further information is available at 212-427-2244, ext. 557.
¡Hasta la próxima!



Latin Beat Update Online

By Nelson Rodríguez

What better way to start the year than with good recordings that came out right at the end of 2010 and during the early days of 2011, featuring names we should all start to get familiar with? New stars are coming out from all corners of the world and the surprises to be encountered this year will be endless. This month I shall mention many Latin jazz recordings that made their way to our 2010 Top Ten lists.

While analyzing the jazz guitar history, one could argue that Charlie Christian revolutionized said instrument by studying with a saxophonist, thus laying the groundwork for future jazz guitarists who played single-line melodies, instead of the strumming style. Soprano saxophonist **Peter MacDonoughs** accomplished something by studying with drummer Michael Spiro, as documented on his CD *The WOO- A Latin Jazz Suite for Soprano Saxophone*, featuring Mark Levine, Jovino Santos, David Belove, Michael Spiro and Paul van Wageningen.

One of my favorite bands, Mambo Kings, hails from Rochester, New York, where its most recent release (*Nostalgia*) was recorded. Led by pianist Richard DeLaney since 1992, this band's powerful lineup includes percussionists David Antonetti and Freddy Colón, bassist Héctor Díaz and a reedman with a mission named John Viavattine. The band is great on the covers (check out Chick Corea's *Armando's Rumba*, adapted here as *Armando's Bomba*) but it gets even better on the original material.

One must realize that **Michel Herrera** should be considered as one of the new Cuban saxophone powerhouses upon listening to his CD *En La Espera*. He excels as the primary composer of this late entry to the jazz world of 2010.

Willie Panamá has brought another pleasant surprise with his debut *Perfect Timing (Salsa Gangsta)*, proving that good music can be created while remaining true to one's sound. With production work that includes three giants (Alberto Barros, Diego Gale and Dante Vargas), Willie Panamá is quickly making a name for himself.

A few years ago, **Son de Tikizia** was a huge surprise to me with its salsa from Costa Rica. Its latest recording, *Salsa-Retro*, will delight their fans even more. The repertoire includes a cover of *Cuban Fantasy* (Latin jazz), the medleys *Perico Mamagüela* and *Mosaico Indestructible*, and the singles *Sonero Mayor*, *Juan Soledad* and *Pa' Curubandé Yo Voy*.

Guitarist **Nelson Rivero's** *Camino al Barrio* encompasses the compositions that he wrote while living in the different boroughs of New York City, hereby performed by an all-star quintet that includes Héctor Martignón, Samuel Torres, Armando Gola and Ernesto Simpson.

Hailing from Amsterdam, The Netherlands, **Latineo** is a band led by drummer Mark de Jong. It features percussionist José "Pepe" Espinosa, pianist Marc Bischoff, bassist Yerman Aponte and guest saxophonist Efraín Trujillo. Its most recent CD, *Two Ways*, contains some great tracks, such as *Choices*, *Silver's Serenade*, *Mr. Kenyatta*, *Ahí Naima* and *Café Casino*.

The **Kevin Hart Latin Jazz Quintet** hails from Champaign-Urbana, and has been part of the Illinois music scene since 1990. Its CD, *Corazón*, can be classified as a "throw-back" to the groove of the 1950s Latin jazz craze. Wait until you hear Deep Purple's classic rock hit *Smoke On the Water* (transformed into a Latin jazz tune) or my two personal favorites —*Black Orchid* and *What Is This Thing Called Love!*

Kudos to Central Florida's WMNF radio host/percussionist Frankie Piñeiro, who has led a quintet for 20 years. To commemorate such twentieth anniversary, Piñeiro's group (**Guisando Caliente**) has released the CD titled *Coolantro*, recorded live at the Side Door (Cabaret Palladium). This is a wonderful Latin jazz disc that includes plenty of great performances by pianist Kenny Drew, Jr., saxophonist Jack Wilkins, bassist Mauricio Rodríguez (native Cuban who was a key acquisition to the quintet nearly ten years ago), drummer John Jenkins and percussionist Frankie Piñeiro.



As a fan of 1960s-1970s Peruvian salsa, it was a pleasure to listen to the music of **Sabor y Control**, starting with its 2009 release *Alta Peligrosidad*, with the great tunes *Le Van a Disparar*, *El Robo*, *Mala*, *El Brujo* and *Un Policía*. Their latest CD, *Barrio Bendito*, also excels, as proven by its title track, as well as *La Suite*, *No Hables Así* and *Salé Caliente*.

One of the first hottest releases of 2011 was recorded by the **Mambo Legends Orchestra** (MLO), comprised of the former musicians of the Tito Puente Orchestra and the Giants of Latin Jazz: *Watch Out!/ Ten Cuidado!* is a 2-CD set well worth the wait, with 14 outstanding tracks produced by Ricky González. It features the vocals of Frankie Vázquez, Cita Rodríguez, Marco Bermúdez, and Jorge Maldonado on one of my favorite numbers, *Para Todo el Mundo Rumba*. Both radio and club DJs will surely have fun with this track and with the powerful arrangements penned by Sonny Bravo, Ricky González, José Madera, Oscar Hernández, Richie Viruet, Angel Fernández and Louis Bauzo. Can anyone say "Grammy nominee"?

One of our treasured musicians in the West Coast is percussionist **Melena**, who displays her years of experience on her bandleading debut, featuring fine support from many of the best musicians in Los Angeles. Co-produced by Luis Eric González, *Baila Conmigo* is just that...a dance sensation.

El Zorro (Martin Richard Lerner) brings his contemporary Latin approach to his latest production — *Sin Compromiso*, containing timba, pop, funk and even reggae touches.

Pequeño Johnny Rivero is getting ready for a new full-fledged recording through the release of his singles *Vengo Echando Candela* and *Tu Regreso*, both of whom should do well on the dance floors.

Comprised of U.S. soldiers formerly deployed in Afghanistan, **Sonido Criminal** is a band led by vocalist Carlos Mojica, whose CD, *Crime Payz*, has been on my playlist for over a year. It includes the hits *Urgente Olvidarte*, *Sandunguera*, *Facebook*, *Careless Whisper* and the powerful track *Rumba en el Cielo*.



DESDE BORINQUEN

Por Elmer González



“UN SUEÑO HECHO REALIDAD”: Así se expresa, con aire de satisfacción, el maestro Modesto Cepeda Brenes frente al nuevo edificio que albergará la “Escuela de Bomba y Plena de Puerto Rico Rafael Cepeda Atilés”.

Durante los últimos 36 años, cada sábado en la mañana, el sonido de los barriles de bomba se escucha en las humildes calles del sector Playita, perteneciente al Barrio Obrero de Santurce. Allí, con la ayuda incondicional de sus hijas Brenda y Gladys, Modesto dirige las clases repletas de niños, padres y amigos que aprenden los bailes y los ritmos de las diferentes variantes de la bomba puertorriqueña, así como la fabricación de sus pertinentes instrumentos.

El espacio limitado, la escasa iluminación y las altas temperaturas del lugar contrastan con la atmósfera de cariño y dedicación, y con las risas y los movimientos de los niños que representan la continuidad de los valores culturales de su tierra natal.

A la edad de 72 años, Modesto es uno de 12 hermanos que representan actualmente a la familia más emblemática en lo que se refiere a la difusión y preservación de la expresión musical más africana y desafiante de la cultura boricua: la bomba.

Bajo la tutela musical de sus padres, Rafael Cepeda y Caridad Brenes, los hermanos Cepeda comenzaron desde muy jóvenes a dedicar sus vidas a la difusión y preservación de los bailes y los ritmos autóctonos de Puerto Rico. Hace 25 años, Modesto soñó con establecer un lugar apropiado para impartir clases y desarrollar proyectos para los niños. Comenzó a tocar puertas y a solicitar apoyo para recaudar fondos económicos y otros recursos. Sus oídos se llenaron de promesas políticas que no se materializaron.

El panorama cambió en el 2010, cuando la Alcaldía de San Juan decidió construir un edificio para albergar tal escuela, la cuál sería inaugurado en el 2011 y estaría ubicada en la calle Rafael Cepeda Atilés del Barrio Obrero de Santurce.

Con su característico entusiasmo, Modesto nos habló de los múltiples proyectos que se estarán desarrollando en la nueva sede de la escuela. Espera seguir ofreciendo espectáculos folclóricos con su grupo Cimiento, además de la celebración anual del “Día Nacional de la bomba” y clases de teoría y solfeo para los niños de la comunidad. Con su lema “Apoya lo Nuestro” Modesto, Brenda y Gladys seguirán buscando el respaldo de individuos e instituciones que colaboren con los costos y con el mantenimiento de los servicios básicos de la escuela.

La nueva sede de la escuela es un esfuerzo importante en una época en la cual nuestros jóvenes pudieran perder de vista sus orígenes culturales. El acceso que estos tienen, a través de la tecnología cibernética, a una cultura universal de carácter mercantil y foráneo puede llegar a desconectarlos de las raíces musicales de su isla natal.

La bomba puertorriqueña nació en los ingenios azucareros como reacción de los esclavos africanos y los criollos humildes a las costumbres musicales de la aristocracia puertorriqueña del siglo IXX. El dolor y la represión, la desigualdad social y la alegría colectiva sirvieron de inspiración a la músicaailable creada por los “bomberos” de aquellos tiempos. Los motivos parecen seguir siendo los mismos en el Siglo XX. Para mayor información, comuníquese con la “Escuela de Bomba y Plena Rafael Cepeda Atilés.” (Teléfono 787- 728-1096).

