

Reviews ⊕⊕⊕

FEBRUARY 2011 ISSUE

PICK OF THE MONTH:

CABO CUBA JAZZ

Rikeza y Valor

(Timbazo Productions)

The music of Cape Verde and Cuba come together within the boundless landscape of jazz, sprouting a fresh sound and style within this new venture by the concept ensemble Cabo Cuba Jazz. The brainchild of percussionist Nils Fischer (from Germany), and pianist Carlos Matos (of Cape Verde), the experimental ensemble shines new light on the genre of Latin jazz on its debut CD, *Rikeza y Valor* with an unprecedented blend of rhythms and forms. Afro-Cuban rhythms intermingle with Cape Verdean musical modalities such as the “moma” (the Cape Verdean blues) and the “coladera” (a festive dance rhythm), creating seductive grooves and intriguing melodies throughout this recording. Brimming vocals by Dina Medina and Grace Evora (Cape Verde), as well as Alberto Caicedo (Colombia), add a passionate and inspirational level to the production. Completing the ensemble are Cuban drum-ace Armando Vidal and Aruban bass virtuoso Reno Steba. Featured guest musicians include Grammy winning trumpeter Brian Lynch, percussionist José “Pepe” Espinosa, and vocalist Laise Sanches, among others. Choice selections include the title track *Rikeza y Valor*, *Ola Tchuva*, and the jazzy *Contratempo* (with imaginative solos by Brian Lynch (trumpet) and Carlos Matos (keyboards). —*Rudy Mangual*



REVIEWS

YORGIS GOIRICELAYA

Elegance

(Yorgismusic Productions)

The second self-produced outing of the Matanzas-born, Miami-based bassists/composer/arranger Yorgis Goiricelaya offers a well-balanced repertoire, mostly comprised of vibrant originals —usually penned by Yorgis and his two main accomplices, pianist Orlando Guancho (of MegaTV fame) and trap drummer/percussionist Hilario Bell —and tastefully updated Cuban classics. Furthermore, one finds various additional assets, including Yorgi’s own refreshing adaptation of Jaco Pastorius’ “Teen Town” and a modernized version of a traditional Afro-Cuban chant to Yemayá.

Yorgis and his companions manage to fuse, in a very pleasant and refined manner, various traditional and contemporary modalities extracted from Cuban’s main genres (son, rumba, danzón, bolero, etc.) with elements drawn from multiple non-Cuban idioms (jazz, funk, blues, samba, etc.), thus justifying the title of the compact disc.*

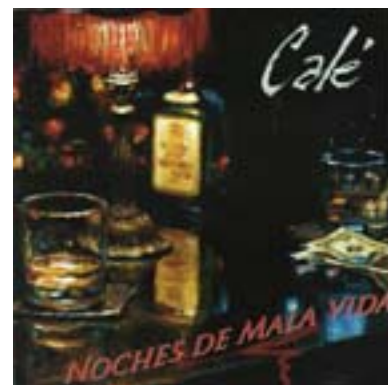


Equally fluent as an acoustic or electric bassist, Yorgis also exhibits his innovative skills as co-arranger, along with Orlando Guanache, on a couple of revitalized Cuban standards —Ignacio Piñeiro's *Echale Salsita* and Aniceto Díaz's *Rompiendo la Rutina* (my favorite track). Díaz's venerable danzonete features the sublime input of a very special sax-playing guest—the one and only Paquito D'Rivera. Not to mention the unique filin-style intervention of another distinguished guest —the versatile crooner Issac Delgado— on Marta Valdes' *Tú No Sospechas*; plus the soulful appearances of a couple of invited pianistic exiles from the most rebellious Cuban province, the one formerly known as Las Villas: Osmany Paredes and Tony Paredes, the latter of whom joins forces with Yorgis on the intimate and enigmatic duet titled *My Love*. —Luis Tamargo

CALE

Noches de Mala Vida (Calé Music)

Allegedly meaning “gypsy” in the ancestral language of the Romani people, “calé” is the call-name of the flamenco-powered trio comprised of the Andalusian guitarists/vocalists José Prieto and Víctor Torres and drummer/percussionist Paul Blazer. Calé delivers an album of original scores, deeply immersed in the traditions of flamenco. Achieving a dynamic similar to that of the Gipsy Kings (but on a smaller scale), this L.A.-based trio offers a more youthful and contemporary repertoire in its debut production, characterized by its Mediterranean-style party attitude. Certain selections, including the title track (*Noches de Mala Vida*), *Sólo Hay Silencio*, and *La Última Estación* manage to capture the essence of the awesome musical fusion known as nuevo flamenco. Additional players in this recording include Tal Bergman (drums/percussion/producer), Marcus Nand (electric guitar/programming/ producer), Carmine Rojas, Eliseo Borrero and Tal Herzberg (basses), Fred Kron (keyboards), and Eva López (vocals). Calé performs regularly around the Los Angeles area as a flamenco duo and trio. —Rudy Mangual



MR. HO'S ORCHESTROTICA

The Unforgettable Sounds of Esquivel (Exotica for Modern Living)

The pianist/percussionist known as Mr. Ho unveils this debut recording of his 23-piece, space-age pop big band called “Orchestrotica,” with a tribute to the musical sound of the late, famous Mexican composer/bandleader Juan García Esquivel. Known as “The King of Space-Age Pop” Esquivel is recognized for his sophisticated, mainly instrumental 1950s-1960s film and television scores, which fused elements of lounge music, jazz, and Latin rhythms. His use of stereo recording was innovative and groundbreaking. Ho's Orchestrotica interprets many of Esquivel's lost arrangements of popular hits from the 20th century, enhanced by today's recording technology, yet stays true to the original vision of the arranger. The recording opens with the classic Ernesto Lecuona composition *Andalucía* which is followed by Cole Porter's *Night and Day*, as well as other standards, such as *Frenesí*, and *Take the A Train*. Pop art (1960s style) nicely adorns the CD package, complementing this unique production. —Rudy Mangual



PAQUITO D’RIVERA
Tango Jazz
(Paquito Records)

“Back in 1959, Ché Guevara and his henchmen influenced the (Cuban) media with insufferable Soviet films, war chants and never-ending speeches by Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Tse Tung,” writes Paquito D’Rivera in the liner notes of his most recent self-produced compact disc. “Ironically, Cubans of my generation had grown up with music and films from the native land of the tenebrous Argentine guerrillero.”

Despite the multiple trials and tribulations generated by the ruling Commie zealots in Havana, Paquito’s love for the tango was perpetually secured eleven years later, according to the following testimony provided by the greatest Latin jazz reedman of all time: “Around 1970, my friend Alberto Romeu played for me that Astor Piazzola LP that sealed forever my love for the tango and the sublime bandoneón, its most emblematic instrument.” It is likely that Paquito’s tango romance was also motivated by an ancestral but often ignored connection: Tango was forged in Argentine brothels from a fusion of milonga (the rural song of the native gauchos) and the tango congo rhythmic patterns imported from Cuba, among other transatlantic influences.

On the CD *Tango Jazz*, recorded live at the Lincoln Center, Paquito (featured on both alto sax and clarinet) is admirably accompanied by bassist Pablo Aslán’s New York-based quintet (augmented on a couple of tracks with a violinist) through an entirely genuine tango-jazz collection of mostly original compositions and arrangements. However, in compliance with Paquito’s Pan-American musical ideology, the repertoire transcends the usual tango-jazz boundaries by incorporating unexpected Brazilian and Cuban elements, as exemplified respectively by pianist Abel Rogantoni’s *Milonguinha* and Aslán’s *Tanguajira*. The latter original features, by the way, the world-renowned Uruguayan bandoneonist Raúl Jaurena, in lieu of Michael Zisman (the Aslán ensemble’s regular bandoneonist and the composer/arranger of “Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind”). —Luis Tamargo



MARK GUTIERREZ
That’s So Cool
(Mark Gutierrez Music)

The Los Angeles-based multi-instrumentalist/composer Mark Gutierrez is enjoying the release of his third production as a leader. While performing and recording for many years with numerous salsa and Latin jazz ensembles throughout Southern California and elsewhere, Gutierrez has always found time to produce his own music, including this latest CD *That’s So Cool*. Playing acoustic and electric guitars, piano and shakers, Gutierrez offers a repertoire comprised of ten original compositions and arrangements. In the sole company of bassist José Marino, Gutierrez blends smooth world-beat styling and soothing ballads. Favorites include the selections *That’s So Cool*, *Memories of You*, and *Medianoche*. —Rudy Mangual

