



MARCH 2010 ISSUE

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QUÉ PASA IN LA

By Rudy Mangual



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Johnny Polanco y Su Conjunto Amistad

El Gusto de Mi Salsa

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Siempre Salsa All Stars

Salsa Para Siempre



The Brazilian Carnival 2010 – held at Club Nokia in L.A. Live (Downtown Los Angeles), on Saturday, February 20, 2010 – was an electrifying success. Emceed by radio celebrities Nayzeth Carillo and Sergio Mielniczenko – producer and host, respectively, of "Brazilian Hour" (kxlu.com) and "Global Village" (kpfk.org) – the carnival brought a taste of the original Brazilian celebration to our city for several hours. The party got started with the traditional carnival parade throughout the Club Nokia, headed by the batucada sounds of Casa Do Samba and by the Mila Samba School's dancers. On stage, master cavaquinho player Claudinho Smile joined

Casa do Samba for an opening set of carnival rhythms from Rio de Janeiro. Chalo Eduardo & Brazilian Beat followed, fueling the party with Bahian carnival beats such as axè, samba-reggae, marchinhas and samba-enredo. Joany & Brazilian Nites Samba Dancers kept the stage sizzling hot with their stunning costumes and exotic choreography. On the dance floor, it was Diane Yakimovicz & Samba4U Bloco's dancers that managed the grooving shoulder-to-shoulder, full-house crowd with their semi-organized dance routines. Headlining the evening was the legendary Trio Electrico, directly from Bahia (with virtuoso guitarist Armandinho), showcasing timeless Brazilian carnival hits, as they celebrated their trio's 60th anniversary. This year's event marked the 10th annual anniversary of this special carnival celebration in the city of Los Angeles. We congratulate the efforts of Patricia and Gilberto Leão, producers of Brazilian Nites Productions, who were responsible for this event, annually designed to nurture the city of Los Angeles, since 1990, with the best of Brazilian culture and talent. Muito obrigado.

Around town: Bobby Matos & his Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble – featuring Theo Saunders (piano), Eliseo Borrero (bass), Dan Weinstein (trombone/violin), Pablo Calogero (tenor sax/flute) and percussionists Robertito Meléndez and Jud Matos – will be performing at Hal's Bar & Grill in Venice, on March 1st.

Orquesta Costazul (led by the Crespo brothers) will be appearing at the Dakota Lounge in Santa Mónica, on Thursday, March 4th.

Orquesta Son Mayor (led by the Ortiz brothers) take the stage of the Monsoon Café in Santa Monica, on Saturday, March 6th.

El Floridita Restaurant, in Hollywood, will be featuring **Orquesta Rumbankete**, on Saturday, March 6th.

Chino Espinoza & Los Dueños del Son will be appearing at Monsoon Café in Santa Mónica, on Wednesday, March 10th.

Salsa Wednesdays at Norwood Bar & Grill, in the city of North Hills, continues this month with the music of **Octavio Figueroa & La Combinación**, on March 17th.

The 8th Annual Spirit of Dance will be held, on Saturday, March 20th at the Hollywood Park Casino, in the city of Inglewood, presented by Salsabor y Caché. The evening live salsa dance party will feature the sounds of Angel Lebrón y su Sabor Latino. Dance groups include Nueva Rumba, Bachata Caliente, Reyes de la Rumba, Alma Latina, and Tropical Rhythm, plus performances by Liz Lira, Esteban Conde, Abel Peña, Francisco Vázquez, and Violeta & Lesley, among others. Dance workshops will begin at 10:00 A.M. and evening events at 8:00 P.M. For more information, call (818) 218-9589.

Tributo a la Salsa Colombiana, featuring Alberto Barros, will take place on Saturday, April 17th, at the Radisson Hotel LAX. For tickets and more information call (818) 770-1755.

The 8th Annual Mi Son Cubano Festival is scheduled for Sunday, May 2nd, at the Frank G. Bonelli Park in the city of San Dimas. Headlining the event this year will be Rey Ruiz's orchestra, directly from Miami. For tickets and more information call (714) 522-6208.

Albert Torres Productions presents **David Calzado y su Charanga Habanera**, on Friday, May 7th, at the Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City.

Support your local arts and artists, and their venues. Peace.



A BITE FROM THE APPLE

By **Vicki Solá**



This year, the **Harbor Conservatory for the Performing Arts** marks its 40th anniversary of providing arts education to New York City's youth. Such efforts are now more critical than ever, as we face an era of strained budgets and drastic educational cutbacks.

Initially established in 1970, at Boys & Girls Harbor, by Juilliard graduate Sandy Owen, the conservatory provides instruction in instrumental and vocal music, dance, and theater. Many of its students eventually go on to perform in motion pictures, television, Broadway plays, and concert stages.

According to Nina Olson, the Harbor's Latin Music Program "was designed to ensure the future of an art form truly unique to New York City that celebrates our country's multi-musical heritage. While its complexity and vibrancy has captivated audiences the world over, the music has been marginalized in this country for many years, along with its creators and their communities. Harbor Conservatory has taken Latin music into the conservatory, developing formal curriculum to ensure that the knowledge and traditions are preserved and passed on to the next generation."

Founded in 1937 by Anthony Duke, Boys & Girls Harbor (formerly Boys Harbor) is a community-based non-profit organization that has enriched the lives of more than 3,500 children from East and Central Harlem and from the Bronx.

Without any doubts, times are tough, economically speaking, and since I wrote my first column for Latin Beat, back in October 1998, I never had a lower number of new productions brought to my attention. In addition to arts funding being reduced or eliminated, today's economic climate makes it increasingly more difficult for our musicians – most of whom finance their own independent productions - to come forth with new products. I am heartened to report that **Papo Ortega's Cubanosón** will release its CD, *Rumba Nueva*, next month. Ernie Acevedo has informed me that a production from new artist Jenny Colón is forthcoming.

One CD that my radio listeners have been enjoying is **Javier Arroyo & Salsa Night Band's *La Cadena Se Rompió***. This vocalist's Boston-based band – featuring some New York players, such as trombonist Hommy Ramos and cuatro guitarist Antonio Guzmán – is scheduled to appear this month on my radio program. Arroyo has shared microphones with Adalberto Santiago, Willie Colón, Luisito Ayala & Puerto Rican Power, Cano Estremera and El Gran Combo.

After growing up in Manatí, Puerto Rico, Arroyo has fond memories of the many evenings his father and uncles played guitars, cuatros, and maracas, while singing boleros, guarachas and rancheras. "The old guys," says Arroyo, "would give me nickels and dimes to sing their favorite songs." He was so impressed with their improvisational abilities that he was inspired to learn their musical art and become a songwriter.

Arroyo fell in love with salsa when he listened to Tito Rodríguez, El Gran Combo, Ismael Rivera, and the Fania label's artists. In Boston, he met producer Israel Tanenbaum and this meeting resulted in the release of his first single, *Puerto Rico*, a composition in which he collaborated with Miguel "Papaíto" Colón. It debuted at Boston's 2002 Puerto Rican Festival and was featured in the dance scene of the independent film "Sidesitters," directed by Christopher Watkins.

DJ Jeff's "Hot Pick of the Month": *Chinita* by the Mario Ortiz All-Star Band (featuring Gilberto Santa Rosa.)

Around town... "Latin Tinge Thursdays" at the Brooklyn Crossroads Supper Club (located in Park Slope) presents groups like Los Hermanos Moreno, and Eddy Zervigón's Orquesta Broadway.

Willie Martínez's La Familia Sextet has been invited to be included in the Jazz at Lincoln Center's After-Hour series conducted at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola. The band plays, on opposite billing to the Bill Charlap Trio, at 11:00 P.M. (on Tuesday, March 9, and Thursday, March 11) and at 1:00 A.M. (on Friday, March 12, and Saturday, March 13).

Chris Washburne's SYOTOS Band celebrates its 18th annual anniversary of weekly performances in the Big Apple, first at the Nuyorican Poets Café, and now at Smoke, where they play the 8:00, 10:00 and 11:30 P.M. sets every Sunday. The club is located at 106th St. and Broadway.

Nyack's **West Gate Lounge's** March roster features Wayne Gorbea & Salsa Picante (March 6th), SonSublime (March 13th), Frankie Morales and his Mambo of the Times Orchestra (March 20th), and Swing Sabroso (March 27th). Showtimes are 11:30 P.M. and 12:45 A.M., and all four evenings feature an added 2:00 A.M. "Late Show", with Junior Vega & Ritmo Sabroso.

Pianist **Chiemi Nakai's Grupo Sabrosongo** performs on April 1st at the Clinton Inn's Hotel Ballroom in Tenafly, New Jersey.

On Saturday, April 24th, **Jimmy Delgado** and the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts will present "**Legends of Salsa 3: Remembering Celia, La Lupe, and Graciela**", featuring Sully Díaz, Yolanda Rivera, Xiomara Leugart, and Cita Rodríguez, along with the Mambo Legends, a 21-piece orchestra under the direction of Johnny "Dandy" Rodríguez, Jr. and José Madera, plus additional performers such as Jimmy Delgado, Frankie Vásquez, and Ronny Puente.

¡Hasta la próxima!



LB MUSIC UPDATE

By Nelson Rodríguez

Off we go into 2010, with exciting new recordings, as well as interesting re-issues, in what we hope to be another big year for salsa. In 2009, there were over 150 releases that could be classified as salsa. Not all good, but the massive production was way beyond any expectations, and this year the economy can make it go either way.

Without any doubt, **Ismael Miranda** has shown by far to be the Fania vocalist with the best staying power. His new CD, *De Regreso*



al Son, has some incredible songs, including *Escándalo*, *Rebeca*, *Desde Que te Fuiste*, *Sí Se Arreglara el Mundo* and *Vendaval Sin Rumbo*.



Salsamba Latin Jazz Group (from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania) is a quintet led by guitarist Eric Susoeff, who just released his group's sixth CD, *Mojito Blues*, featuring a joyous and pleasant feast of chachachá, mambo, funky jazz, and more.

NG2's *Exitos y Mas* is the energetic CD you want to have, released by said duo from Puerto Rico, with its best hits and a few new tunes. Besides the hits, my favorites are *Sí Se Pierde*, *Duele* and *Cuando Tus Ojos Me Miran*.

One Cuban pianist who is not only endowed with incredible talent but continues to thrive with new ideas is **Roberto Fonseca**, as shown on his new release *Akokán*. He is currently touring with Omara Portuondo, after previously traveling throughout the U.S. with the Buena Vista Social Club. He shines as a composer and performer on his latest recording.

Yet another Cuban pianist with a new production is **Manuel Valera**, whose straight-ahead jazz project, *Currents*, clearly showcases the talent of one of the top performers of the next generation.

I must thank the renowned Colombian percussionist Hernán "Tato Tatín" Benítez for making sure I got the latest **Grupo Galé** CD, titled *Instinto*. Although it is a bit more sensual than Galé's last few releases, "Instinto" has some very fine tracks that could become huge hits. Also in the package was Galé's 19-track DVD "15th Anniversary" an awesome concert worth having; The **Adolescent's Orquesta** DVD/CD combo *Clásicos en Vivo*; **Conjunto Clásico's** *En Concierto* DVD/CD (with Héctor Luis as vocalist), and Tito Gómez's DVD/CD *Un Legado Musical* (Lo Nuevo y Lo Mejor), recorded in April 19, 2007. Good collector's items worth bringing into your library.

An early entry to my Top Ten of 2010 has to be the new **Mark Weinstein** CD, *Timbasa*, which completely blew me away and reminded me of the energy Weinstein had displayed when he went solo with *Cuban Roots*. Known primarily by many as a trombonist, in his early days with Larry Harlow and with Eddie Palmieri's *La Perfecta*, Weinstein is featured here (and excels to great heights) as a flutist. What makes this CD such a huge winner is the cast that surrounds Weinstein, starting with co-producer Pedrito Martínez, who brought along drummer Mauricio Herrera and percussionist Ogduardo Díaz, along with pianist Axel Tosca Laugart and bassist Panagiotis Andreou, all of whom comprise a very tight and well-seasoned team.

Another hot Latin jazz release comes to us from Venezuelan trumpeter **Michael Simón**. It is titled *New York Encounters*, and features Miguel Zenón, Andy González, Marlon Simón, Boris Kozlov, Edward Simón, Peter Brainin, and Roberto Quintero, plus guests Luisito Quintero and Noah Bless. The lineup alone should tell you what you are in store for. Most of the compositions were

penned by Michael, although a couple of tunes were authored by his brother Edward. The CD is a historical journey that documents the growth of this talented trumpeter.

Listening to the new **Vampi Soul** compilation *Mangó Mangüé* by El Gran Fellove (Francisco Fellove Valdés) made me pull out the RCA LPs he recorded for greater listening pleasure, but I can tell you that in said 21-track anthology, you'll find more than enough enjoyment from this Hall-of-Famer. *Mangó Mangüé* (a tune recorded by Miguelito Valdés, Celia Cruz, Johnny Pacheco and many others) sounds refreshing when sung by its creator. And wait until you listen to *El Yoyo*, *Baile Mi Rumba*, *Anota Mi Canción*, *Flora*, *Cortaron a Elena*, *Mi Guaguancó* and *¡Qué Bueno Está el Ambiente!*

Charanga Cubana's *Hasta Afuera* is a clear declaration that charanga music is alive and well in the West Coast, as the aforesaid band swings with son, pilón, guajira, and timba, plus the closing track, *Descarga Dimelo*, where Charanga Cubana is joined by Chino Espinoza and Tabaco y Ron.

Raúl Rico Jr. turned me on to *Nuestro*, a band that he has been known to play with. **Nuestro** has released two CDs (*In the Park* and *La Colección*), featuring salsa, soul and funk all wrapped up into one. I loved these CDs; and fans of Cintrón from back east will certainly enjoy these recordings.

I'm looking forward to restoring a series of **Max Salazar** interviews he recorded on cassette format, to be eventually transmitted online, in order to document those classic meetings he had with Willie Bobo, Cal Tjader, Tito Puente, Mongo Santamaría, George Shearing, Charlie Palmieri, Eddie Palmieri and more.

Avance is a S.F. Bay Area band comprised of Karl Perazzo, Armando Córdoba, Jimmy Flores, Jeff Córdoba and Luis Morales. On its new CD (*Incontrolable*). Avance delivers more salsa than in its previous productions. This 10-year old band is a true treasure for fans of good salsa.



DESDE BORINQUEN

Por Elmer González

Fotos @Julio Costoso

LOS VAN VAN EN PUERTO RICO. Una ausencia de poco más de siete años no llegó a disminuir la popularidad de Los Van Van entre los fanáticos boricuas que bailaron con la tropa de Juan Formell durante sus presentaciones en Puerto Rico en los años noventa. Van Van regresó "arrasando" a San Juan, el pasado 4 de febrero, cuando deleitó a más de



cinco mil entusiastas en el Coliseo de Puerto Rico ubicado en el sector de Hato Rey.

Con su característico sonido de violines y trombones y con el vibrante pulso rítmico del songo, la banda cubana logró levantar a todos los presentes de sus asientos, a partir de los primeros acordes. Ante la ovación inicial del público, el cantante Robertón Hernández alcanzó a decir: "Juan, aquí es distinto". Fue una clara alusión a las manifestaciones realizadas por un grupo de cubanos exiliados frente al teatro James L. Knight de Miami que protestaban el 30 de enero por la presentación de Los Van Van en esa ciudad. En San Juan ondearon las banderas monoestrelladas de Cuba y Puerto Rico, flotando sobre un mar de brazos levantados y caderas danzantes.



Durante dos horas y a través de 17 temas, la banda hizo un recorrido musical que documentó su trayectoria de cuatro décadas. El público reconoció y se unió a los coros de múltiples temas, tales como *Aquí el que baila gana*, *Anda, ven, muévete*, *Ampárame* y *El guararey de Pastora*, los cuales fueron interpretados en forma de popurrí.



Los cantantes lucieron entusiasmados y parecieron ofrecer lo mejor de sus talentos. Mayito Rivera provocó aplausos, al igual que su homólogo Miguel Ángel "Lelé" Rosales. La vocalista Yenny Valdés fue la gran revelación para los boricuas, considerando su simpática soltura, así como su interpretación de *Después de todo*, enriquecida con un fuerte sentido feminista del humor.

Durante la presentación, subieron a la tarima varios cantantes boricuas, tales como Jerry Medina y Andy Montañez los cuales improvisaron frases soneras. También fue invitada la cantante Vanessa Formell, quien reside en Miami, la cual fue apropiadamente acompañada por el grupo que dirige su padre.

Tal parece que el concierto en San Juan forma parte de la antesala a una gira de 70 presentaciones que Los Van Van estarán realizando durante el verano de 2010 en los Estados Unidos y en Canadá.

EL PUERTO RICO HEINEKEN JAZZ FEST CUMPLE 20 AÑOS. Ya se anunció la celebración del Puerto Rico Heineken JazzFest que se realizará del 3 al 6 de junio de 2010 en el Anfiteatro Tito Puente.

Para esta vigésima edición han invitado a varios artistas que se habían presentado anteriormente, así como a otros que ya han sido homenajeados en este festival, el más importante dentro del ambiente jazzístico de Borinquen.

Luis Álvarez, productor del evento, anunció la participación de los siguientes artistas: el Jazz Proyecto de Humberto Ramírez, el sexteto de Paquito D' Rivera, el Ethno-Jazz Project de William Cepeda, George Wein & Newport All-Stars, el trio de Michel Camilo, Giovanni Tommaso Apogeo, el grupo de Miguel Zenón y el trio de Chick Corea.

También se presentará una big band que incluirá a invitados tales como Eddie Palmieri, Andy González, Eddie Gómez, Chick Corea, Dave Valentín, Giovanni Hidalgo y Alex Acuña.



DESDE LA BAHIA

By Jesse "Chuy" Varela

FELIZ AÑO NUEVO: The promise of a new year is always invigorating, as it offers a new start in the daily race with life's trials and tribulations. The 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, is one of those tribulations that have stunned the entire world. Communities all around the globe were mobilized to get relief aid to the surviving disaster victims as they were being dug out of the mass rubble. The SF Bay Area was no exception.

HAITI BENEFITS: In the Bay Area, timbalero/bandleader Tito García organized one of the first salsa benefits for Haiti at San Francisco's Café Cocomo on Tuesday, January 19. "Dance Your Ass Off for Haiti" featured García's fine Orquesta Internacional, along with an all-star



cast of guest musicians. DJ Luis Medina, DJ Antonio, DJ Mendy, and Fab Fred also donated their time for the cause.



"After seeing all the images on CNN of the Haiti crisis, I felt compelled to put in my two cents for the relief effort. I got together with Café Cocomo and they are allowing me and the other musicians to use Café Cocomo for a benefit concert for the Haiti Relief Fund through the American Red Cross," wrote García in an e-mail prior to the event.

Among the participating musicians were Christian Tumalan, Coto Pincheira, Julio Bravo, Kevin Silveira, Mike Spiro, Jesús Díaz, Rick Rangel, Valeriana Quevedo, Eric Rangel, Carlos Ramírez, Dave Scott, Marvin McFadden, Scott Englebright, Jim Burr, Darren Smith, and Fito Reinoso. Despite rainstorms and chilly temperatures, people turned out for this event and several thousand dollars were raised.

On the other side of town, at the Glas Kat (a fine nightclub south of Market Street), there were two benefit parties for Haiti organized by Dinah Bowen. The entertainment was provided by DJs Super Chino and Él de la Clave, along with the live salsa sounds of Orquesta Humbria. Upstairs, a Bachata social event included a free bachata lesson by dance instructor Rodchata, while DJ Guapo supplied the music.

Props to the good-hearted people who helped make these events happen.

KARL PERAZZO & AVANCE: "Siempre pa'lante, nunca pa'trás" should be the motto of Karl Perazzo (pictured above), a percussionist who has garnered worldwide acclaim as a member of the Santana Band. Most recently, he teamed up with Sheila Escovedo and was featured in the all-star band chosen for the "Latin Fiesta" hosted by President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House. It's just one more feather in the cap of an extraordinary musician whose resumé includes stints with Prince and many pop greats.

Karl Perazzo, a San Francisco native who still resides in the Bay Area, continues to cultivate his bandleading qualities by fronting a top-notch salsa ensemble called Avance. In 2009, the group released its fourth album, *Incontrolable*, on Mona Records (a label owned by Karl and his wife Debbie). In my opinion, it stands as the best Bay Area salsa album of that year. The collective talent and seasoned experience of its members is what gives Avance a dynamic edge. The polished frontline singers – Armando and Jeff Córdoba, Jimmy Flores and Luis Morales – are capable of covering a variety of genres, as shown on the CD *Incontrolable*. The band is made up of musicians that bring high-scale skills and chops. Mike Rinta is featured on trombone, and he is credited for many of the arrangements. Cuban percussion ace Carlos Caro adds his tremendous talent to the date. Overall, this album is one of the band's best!

VOICES OF LATIN ROCK EXPERIENCE: In addition, Karl Perazzo has recently taken over the

reins of the Voices of Latin Rock Band. As its musical director, he has created a monster ensemble that can play anything! This was demonstrated on Thursday, January 21, at Bimbo's 365 Club in San Francisco, where he joined forces with Tal Mahal, Lenny Williams (Tower of Power), Tony Lindsey (Santana), Lester Chambers (The Chambers Brothers.), Fred Sánchez (El Chicano) and Tom Johnston (Doobie Brothers).

With the help of Mike Rinta, the Latin-tinged arrangements of said artists' hits were framed in new and exciting ways that surprised and delighted that those who attended the Autism Awareness Benefit organized by Dr. Bernardo González, Ron Sansoe and Jeff Trager.

Watching Perazzo direct the 13-member band was reminiscent of Johnny Pacheco and Tito Puente's bandleading styles. He would be playing and guiding the tempos, and then would suddenly drop the sticks to conduct the dynamics of a horn passage. His leadership is a testament to a career built on exceptional talent and professionalism. ¡Qué viva Karl Perazzo! ¡Hasta la próxima! chuyvarela@aol.com



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