

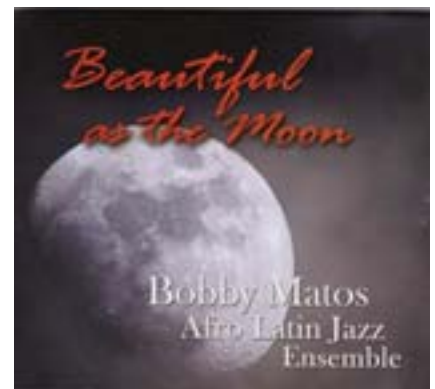
Reviews ⊕ ⊕ ⊕

MARCH 2011 ISSUE

PICK OF THE MONTH

BOBBY MATOS AFRO LATIN JAZZ ENSEMBLE **Beautiful As the Moon** **(Lifeforce Jazz Records)**

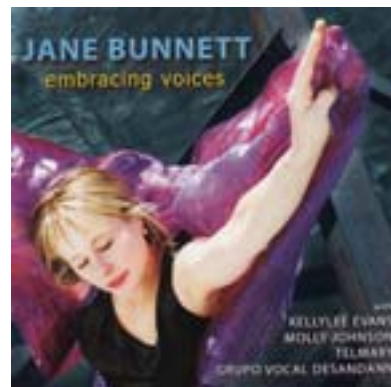
Los Angeles-based bandleader/percussionist Bobby Matos is a veritable ambassador of Latin jazz and his latest release *Beautiful as the Moon* reflects just that. With Matos on timbal his posse of jazzistas includes Theo Sanders (piano), John B. Williams (bass), Danny Weinstein (trombone/violin), Pablo Calogero (tenor sax/flute), Robertito Melendez (congas/bongo), and Jud Matos (minor percussions). They take on a mixed repertoire of original scores including *Pop Moish* and *Early Morning Song* (composed and arranged by Bobby Matos), *Fiddlunky* (composed and arranged by Danny Weinstein) *Mi Santiaguito* (composed and arranged by Pablo Calogero), and classic jazz standards such as *Monk's Mood* (composed by Thelonious Monk and arranged by Bobby Matos), and *Maiden Voyage* (composed by Herbie Hancock and arranged by Bobby Matos). Completing the production are the selections *Maramoor Mambo* (an Armando Peraza composition), the title track *Beautiful as the Moon* (composed by Chaim Tauber/ Tauzberg and Joseph Rumshinks), and *Just Another Guajira* (a Mark Weinstein composition). The first nine tracks in the CD were recorded live on June 29, 2010 at the Saville Theater in San Diego City College, and track #10 *Buena Gente* (composed by Wilson "Chembo" Corniel and Frank Fontaine) was recorded at Private Island Trax in Los Angeles. The magic and dynamics of a live Latin jazz performance are truly captured in this recording. —*Rudy Mangual*



REVIEWS

JANE BUNNETT *Embracing Voices* (Sunnyside)

On her most recent release, the formidable Canadian composer/arranger/woodwind jazz master Jane Bunnett discharged her sinuous and imaginative soprano styling, in conjunction with her penetrating flute traits. As usual, Bunnett is accompanied by the pleasing flugelhorn and thick trumpet sounds of her talented countryman and soulmate, Larry Cramer, and an admirable rhythm Cuban-Canadian rhythm section, comprised this time around of David Virelles (piano, marimba), Yunion Terry (acoustic bass), Jorge “Papiosco” Torres (percussion), Pablosky Rosales (tres guitar), Frank Durand (drums, marimba), and Don Thompson (vibes, piano, marimba, bass), the latter of whom shares the arranging credits with the aforesaid bandleader. What truly matters is that all of them pulsate melodiously through a Panamerican (and mostly original) repertoire, melding complex jazz harmonies and swinging Cuban/Caribbean grooves consistently enriched with the haunting presence of the Camagüey-based Grupo Vocal Desandann—a unique Criol-language, 10-voice choir entirely consisting of Cubans of Haitian descent*. Not to mention the significant English-language contributions occasionally offered by a couple of astonishing Canadian jazz chanteuses, Kellylee Evans (also credited as lyricist on four tracks) and Molly Johnson, plus the meaningful Spanish-language narration delivered in a Havanesestyle rapeo format by the versatile expatriate Telmary Díaz on the sixth track, a moving post-mortem rumba homage to Pancho Quinto.



“When I was a little girl, I loved to sing and was inspired by the great voices of the jazz era,” declared Bunnett. “I didn’t realize it then, but it was the beginning of a beautiful musical journey, one that began with vocal experimentation and led to my instrument of choice—woodwinds. *Embracing Voices* brings me full circle.” Needless to say, the globetrotting “Havana Jane” is absolutely correct.—*Luis Tamargo*

**Numerous Haitian and Jamaican immigrants worked in the sugarcane plantations of Eastern Cuba during the prosperous pre-Castro era, when the island was the world’s largest sugar producer.*

SONIDO CRIMINAL
Crime Payz
(Sonido Criminal)

Gangsta Salsa? No, instead, hard-core salsa with a tinge of hip-hop and lots of energy channeled via New York and Puerto Rican style salsa. Singer/composer Carlos Mojica (a native of Patterson, New Jersey, of Puerto Rican heritage and based in Orlando, Florida, has been writing and singing salsa since his teen years. This debut recording with his band “Sonido Criminal” features 10 tracks, including eight scores penned by Mojica, plus a salsa version of the pop-classic hit *Careless Whisper* (composed by George Michaels and Andrew Ridgeley), as well as the selection *Borinquen*, composed by Charlie López. All the tracks are arranged by Sonido Criminal delivering an aggressive and uplifting sound. My personal favorites include the selections *Borinquen*, the title track *Crime Payz* (reminiscent of the early Willie Colón and Héctor Lavoe sound), and *Sandunguera*. Track #2 is omitted from the credits, listing *Careless Whisper* as the second track, while in reality it’s the third track. —*Rudy Mangual*



JOHN SANTOS Y EL CORO FOLKLÓRICO KINDEMBO
La Esperanza
(Machete Records)

En relación al admirable historial artístico del percusionista/compositor/arreglista pedagogo californiano John Santos, mi ecobio Nat Chediak señaló en su “Diccionario de Jazz Latino” (Fundación Autor, 1998) que “los polirritmos africanos en su más pura esencia ejercen sobre él la mayor fascinación.” Tal fascinación se puede apreciar a través de la susodicha grabación de Santos, cuyo repertorio combina números originales y tradicionales que se fundamentan mayormente en los tambores y cantos litúrgicos del folklor afrocubano, aunque también asimila nutritivos ingredientes extraídos de múltiples géneros populares de procedencia afroibérica (desde el son y la rumba cubana hasta la bomba puertorriqueña y el maracatú brasileño), incorporando ocasionalmente instrumentos de carácter heterodoxo al tradicional formato folklórico afrocubano. Además de sus cómplices usuales de San Francisco y territorios aledaños, Santos cuenta aquí con la participación productiva de diversos “artistas invitados” provenientes de otras comarcas, tales como el tresero Nelson González, el trombonista Jimmy Bosh y el pianista Elio Villafranca, entre otros. —*Luis Tamargo*



RITMDELIA

It's Not Batucada!

(Ritmodelia)

Recorded In January and February 2009 at The Camaldolese Basement in Warsaw, Poland, this recording marks the debut of the percussion group "Ritmodelia." Ten tracks showcase percussion music created to be performed in motion. As the liner notes indicate, "movement and dance fully unleash the primal power of the rhythm." Rhythms from Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean are captured in motion in this recording as traditionally performed at outdoor parties and events in their homelands guaranteed to make you move your feet. Featuring percussionists Scott Kettner and Greg Beyer, Ritmodelia also includes Hubert Zemler, Nikodem Bakowski, Bogusz Wekka, Wojtek Sobura, Manuel Alban Juarez, Jurek Markuszewski, Miki Wielecki, Ania Patynek, Kuba Pogorzelski, and Mikosz Pekala. Percussion instruments like surdos, chekeres, cowbells, agogo, cabasa, shakers, tamborims, pandeiros, repiniques, snare drums, djembe, cuica, timbas, and jam blocks, among many others are highlighted throughout this recording. Favorites include the tracks *Ragga*, *Djibu*, *Karigna*, and *Samba Nao E*. —Rudy Mangual



ALEX BROWN

Pianist

(Paquito Records)

Produced by Paquito D’Rivera for his eponymous independent label, Alex Brown’s impressive bandleading debut exhibits this young player’s refined pianistic swing and good judgment. Although he is fundamentally a jazzman, Paquito’s protégé demonstrates a clear understanding — directly or indirectly— of other musical forms, from Cuban danzón to Brazilian chorinho to Andalusian flamenco to classical European sources. With the exception of Pixinguina’s *Lamentos* (strongly influenced by Trio Correntes’s own version) and Cole Porter’s *Just One of Those Things* (notice how Brown’s experimental arrangement is based on a funk beat), the repertoire is comprised of original compositions. “Much like Duke (Ellington), this youngster has the keen eye to choose the best sidemen to interpret his well-elaborated compositions and arrangements,” declares Paquito, who appears as guest reedman (playing alto sax or clarinet) on a third of the tracks. In addition to his permanent associates (acoustic bassist Ben Williams and drummer Eric Doob), Brown is backed occasionally by Vivek Patel (flugelhorn), Warren Wolf (marimba), and Paquito’s homeboy, the formidable Cuban percussionist/vocalist Pedro Martínez (this exiled rumba master, by the way, has recently recorded a post-mortem tribute to the legendary flamenquista Camarón de la Isla, soon to be released by the prestigious Iberian label Calle 54). —Luis Tamargo



SERGEANT GARCIA

Una y Otra Vez (Cumbancha)

Bruno Garcia, alias Sargento Garcia is a French national with a Spanish father and a French mother with family ties from Algeria to the Ivory Coast. He was the creator of “salsamuffin” the fusion of reggae and Jamaican dancehall music with Caribbean rhythms in the decade of the 1990s, as well as a pioneer of the French punk and Indie rock movement. After releasing five productions as a leader for the Virgin Records label from 1997 to 2006 and earning international fame, Garcia returned to the world music scene with his sixth recording *Una y Otra Vez*, now under the Cumbancha label. *Una y Otra Vez* explores the contemporary music tendencies and modalities of Colombian music, which Garcia first experienced during a South American tour in 2005. He called upon the talents of Colombian artists and musicians including Jacobo Vélez (clarinet) from the group “La Mojarra Eléctrica”, Erika Muñoz (vocalist) from the group “Sidestepper”, Li Saumet (vocalist) from the group “Bomba Estéreo”, and members of the Colombian salsa orchestra “La 33”.

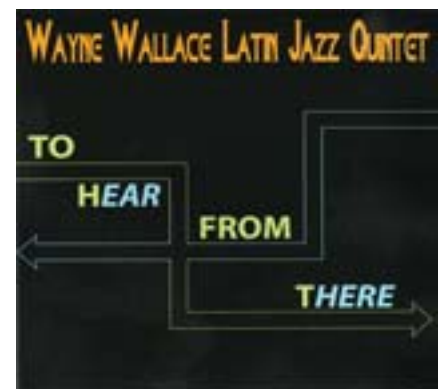


The result is an awesome Latin dance party a la Sargento Garcia style with cumbia, ragga, rumba, and dancehall with Cuban son, among many other musical styles. As always, Garcia performs his lyrics in Spanish, French, and English. Standouts include the selections *Yo Soy Salsamuffin*, *Mi Son Mi Friend*, *To Mi To Mi*, and *En Mi Mochila*. —Rudy Mangual

WAYNE WALLACE LATIN JAZZ QUINTET

To Hear From There (Patois)

Considerado por el controversial escribano abajofirmante como el más influyente y sorprendente trombonista del llamado “Latin jazz” al oeste del Mississippi, el californiano Wayne Wallace (renombrado también como compositor, arreglista, educador y productor discográfico) mezcla admirablemente, en su más reciente grabación en solitario, una amplia gama de géneros cubanos (mambo, chachachá, son, bolero, guaguancó, songo, timba, etc.) con numerosos elementos del jazz y otros idiomas musicales norteamericanos (blues, funk, etc.) a través de una combinación de composiciones originales y estándares de origen antillano o estadounidense.



De hecho, uno puede apreciar la pasión que siente Wallace por la música cubana al escuchar sus temas originales, lo mismo en el mazacote timbero en 4/4 de *La Escuela* que en la multiestilística amalgama trombonística de *Serafina del Caribe* (erroneamente subtítulo como *La Mensajera*, en lugar de *La Mensajera*)* o en la energía descarguista de *¡Bebo Ya Llegó!* (un tributo refinado al Caballón de Estocolmo), entre otros.

No podemos dejar de mencionar las notables aportaciones de un par de cantantes invitados: Kenny Washington —oriundo de Nueva Orleans— contribuye sus sobresalientes destrezas (a pesar de ciertos problemas de pronunciación) al estándar de Juan Tizol titulado *Perdido*, mientras que Bobi

Céspedes —principal diva de la diáspora cubana en la costa del Pacífico— ofrece una versión refrescante de *El Manicero*, sempiterno son-pregón de Moisés Simons.

El alto nivel cualitativo de este proyecto se deriva también de la creatividad interactiva de los cómplices usuales de Wallace, cuyo quinteto incluye a los siguientes personajes: el pianista Murray Low (alias “ El Funky Chino”), el bajista David Belove, el baterista Paul van Wageningen y el percusionista Michel Spiro, el último de los cuales garantizó la esencia lucumí de *Ogguere* (canción de cuna de Gilberto Valdés, ejecutada en ritmo afro de 6/8) y *Yemayá/The Seven Seas*, tema de “Latin funk” inspirado por un conocido canto tradicional a la susodicha deidad yoruba.

Wallace ha declarado que “el progreso de un artista se deriva de la búsqueda de las raíces de lo que uno hace y ama”. Es indiscutible que el CD *To Hear from There* justifica con creces tal declaración.

—*Luis Tamargo*

- * Wallace cuenta en este enciclopédico tour-de-force con el respaldo de otros tres exponentes de su instrumento primordial: Jeff Cressman, Natalie Cressman y Dave Martel.