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Reviews

MARCH 2012 ISSUE

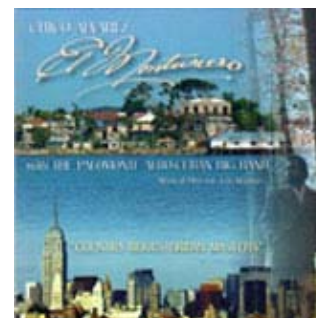
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PICK OF THE MONTH

CHICO ÁLVAREZ WITH THE PALOMONTE AFRO-CUBAN BIG BAND
Country Roots/Urban Masters
(Mafimba Productions)

Pour a glass of your favorite wine, spirit, or alternative beverage, place this CD on your player, sit back, relax and get ready to be transported to the Latin big band sounds of the 1950s from Havana, Cuba to New York City. Radio personality/ Latin Beat Magazine contributing writer/bandleader/composer/vocalist/ percussionist Ernesto "Chico" Álvarez brings us his latest endeavor in the company of a mammoth orchestra (The Palomonte Afro-Cuban Big Band) under the musical direction of legendary master pianist/arranger Edy Martínez. Boosting a mixed repertoire of original scores and brilliantly arranged classic tunes, Álvarez and his posse of New York City-based top-gun players pay tribute to the phat big band sounds of Latin and jazz legends such as Machito, Count Basie, Pérez Prado, Arsenio Rodríguez, Tito Puente, Tito Rodríguez, and José Curbelo, among many others. Completing the production are a couple of jazz standards, including "Autumn Leaves", and "Jumpin' with Symphony Sid" (both with inspirational English lyrics by Alvarez). Topping the list of favorite tracks are "Esta Noche," "Macho's Latin Satin," "Jumpin' with Symphony Sid," and "El Indio Caonabo." I understand if you have to get up and dance. I did! —*Rudy Mangual*



Chico Álvarez
 El Indio Caonabo
Windows Media
Quicktime

Bio Ritmo
 La Muralla
Streaming Music

Louie Cruz Beltran
 Paint the Rhythm
Windows Media

REVIEWS

Quicktime

Cintron Band Live

Human Nature

Windows Media**Quicktime**

Vanelis

Como Lo Extraño

Windows Media**Quicktime**

Nayibe

Borinquen

Windows Media**Quicktime**

Luis González

Spain

Windows Media**Quicktime**

Rolando Sanchez

Vamonos De Fiesta

Windows Media**Quicktime**

Steve Pouchie

Watch Ur Wallet

Windows Media**Quicktime**

Somos Son

Bilongo

Windows Media**Quicktime**

The Estrada Brothers

Mr. Ray

ELIO VILAFRANCA & ARTURO STABLE**Dos y Mas
(Motéma)**

Two innovative classically trained, U.S.-based Cuban artists embark on a magical voyage throughout an entirely original repertoire, in which Elio Villafranca's sparkling piano technique interlocks with Arturo Stable's awesome percussive abilities. Elegantly alternating jazz elements and "world music" concepts, Villafranca and Stable pay homage to the musical cultures of their native island, Spain, Africa, and even the Middle East. Check out the 6/8 lucumí references of Stable's "En la Colonia," or the mixture of Andalusian rhythm, jazz technique, and Cuban inflections on Villafranca's "Vertiente." No to mention the enchanting recreation of an ancient arará1 melody over a refined danzón rhythm on the Villafranca original properly titled "Arará." A native of Pinar del Rio (Cuba's easternmost province), Villafranca is also the author of the album's compelling climax: Featuring the nostalgic lead vocals of Igor Arias, Villafranca's "Cuba Linda"² gracefully blends the guaguancó idiom with the currently endangered tradition of choral singing known as "coros de clave." The abovementioned facts motivated a pianistic legend by the name of Michel Camilo to offer the following recommendation: "Elio and Arturo's creative spirits soar to new heights on this album, delighting us as we listen to these refreshing new voices from the Afro-Cuban jazz tradition"... Bien dicho, tigre. —*Luis Tamargo*



1. Arará: Name given to the expressive Afro-Cuban musical culture originating from present-day Ghana, Benin, and Togo.
2. Not to be confused with the eponymous guaguancó composed by the late Virgilio Martí and recorded by New York City's illustrious Grupo Folklórico Experimental.

HENRY COLE AND THE AFROBEAT COLLECTIVE**Roots before Branches
(Henry Cole)**

Puerto Rican drummer Henry Cole takes Fela Kuti's Afro Beat to the new millennium by combining the rootsy sounds of Boricua bomba and plena, Cuban rumba, and the urban energy of hip hop and rock with Lagos' contagious dance beat. Recorded in Puerto Rico and New York City, this CD features a cast of luminary jazzistas such as reedmen David Sánchez, Miguel Zenón and John Ellis, and salseros like Piro Rodríguez and Cheito Quiñones, plus the raw-edge guitar work of Adam Rogers, among many others. Cole delivers a fresh and funky vision of everything rhythmic via evocative melodies, while pouring his heart and soul into each track. The recording is further enhanced by the delivery of spoken word and rap poetry (en



Windows Media Quicktime

Manny Silvera

Bassed in America

Windows Media Quicktime

Bobby Matos

Cuchy Frito Man

Windows Media Quicktime

español) by Hemes Ayala (who rocks the mic on the selection “Trabájala”) and Mara Pastor. But it was the groove of the organ-powered “Solo dos veces” that made me a believer. Cole lays down a tasty Afro-funk beat with a keen organic sense of timing and melody that demonstrates his dominion of the percussion idiom. “In the end, all the tracks come together in the spirit of play, like the upbeat jam session of “Old San Juan,” thus ‘capturing the sheer delight of making music that grooves, according to Cole’s own words. Other favorites include the tracks “No Eres Tú, Soy Yo”, and “Una Para Isabel”.

—*Rudy Mangual*

PELUSA & LA BANDA CARAMBA

Escuela de Salsa

(EG Music)

This recording marks the debut of the Colombian salseros known as Pelusa & La Banda Caramba. Led by veteran pianist/arranger /musical director Alvaro Carbarcas, better known as “Pelusa” (who has worked with Grupo Niche, Fruko y sus Tesos, Joe Arroyo, Tito Gómez, Andy Montañez, Oscar D’León and Maelo Ruiz), La Banda Caramba plays dance-friendly, hardcore salsa, as well as all its derivatives (such as “salsa romántica”). Featuring top-caliber players from Colombia, plus the energetic and talented vocalists Alex Torres and Jonathan Betancourt, this CD showcases 10 original tunes, including the title track (“Escuela de Salsa”) which also served as the theme song of the “2010 Feria de Cali” (the largest salsa festival in the world). Other standouts include the selections “Oye, Culebra,” “Caramba Son”, and “De Cama en Cama”. The list of special guests includes the likes of Luisito Quintero (percussion), Mónica Castro (vibes/percussion), and vocalists Diana Serna and Johnny Rivera. —*Rudy Mangual*



MOZIK

Mozik

(Mozik)

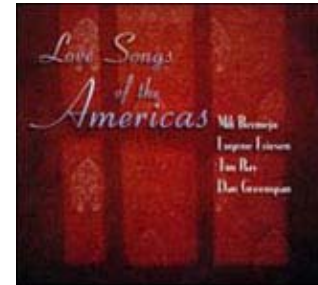
Mostly recorded at the Berklee College of Music, this self-titled production by the quintet Mozik is co-led by a couple of Berklee graduates —Gilson Schachnik (keyboardist) and Mauricio Zottarelli (drums). Characterized by its contemporary arrangements, Mozik delivers rhythmic Brazilian fusion sounds reminiscent of Azymuth and the groups led by Airto Moreira, without becoming too “retro.” Drummer Zottarelli is remarkable, practically providing a clinic on Brazilian drumming and percussion. The quintet performs a program comprised mostly of Brazilian and jazz standards, with only two original scores. My favorite ones are “Web’s Samba” (penned by Schachnik, who also shines on keyboards throughout the entire recording), Jobim’s “O Amor Em Paz,” and Duarte’s “Canto Das Tres Raças.” Completing the quintet are Yulia Musayelyan (flute), Fernando Huergo (bass), and Gustavo Assis-Brasil (guitars). This recording was made



possible by a Faculty Recording Grant awarded by the Berklee College of Music. —*Rudy Mangual*

MILI BERMEJO
Love Songs of the Americas
(Self-Produced)

Backed by a drumless but sensitive jazz trio* and the Berklee World String Orchestra (under the direction of Eugene Friesen, author of the upcoming book titled “Improvisational Strategies for Classically Trained Musicians”), the Mexican-Argentinean vocalist Mili Bermejo (based in Boston since 1978) delivers an attractive repertoire of romantic tunes in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. Bermejo applies her abiding ardor and technical facility to this Panamerican collection of love songs. Her voice can fly high or become intense, but always allows plenty of room to her fellow musicians. —*Luis Tamargo*



*Comprised of cellist Eugene Friesen, pianist Tim Ray, and contrabassist Dan Greenspan (Bermejo's husband).

AZESÚ
Azesú
(Azesu.com)

Featuring the legendary Cuban timbalero Orestes Vilató and the Venezuelan singer María Márquez, “Azesú” is an intimate sextet that performs original scores and jazz-tinged gems from the Latin American songbook. An 11-song repertoire takes you on a Latin American musical journey through the Caribbean islands, Venezuela, Perú, Brazil, Uruguay, and back to their home base in the San Francisco Bay Area. Azesú performs salsa, joropo, festejo, landó, baião, bomba, tanguillo, camdombe, and Venezuelan merengue. Rounding up the group are Peruvian bassist David Pinto, Venezuelan percussionist/vocalist Omar Ledezma, and a couple of jazz-heads: Jonathan Alford (piano) and Sheldon Brown (reeds/flute). Highlighting the recording are the tracks “El Muñeco,” “Odiame,” “Payaso,” and “El Funk del Chisme.” —*Rudy Mangual*



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