

Reviews ⊕⊕⊕

APRIL 2011 ISSUE

PICK OF THE MONTH

VANELIS

Esa Soy Yo

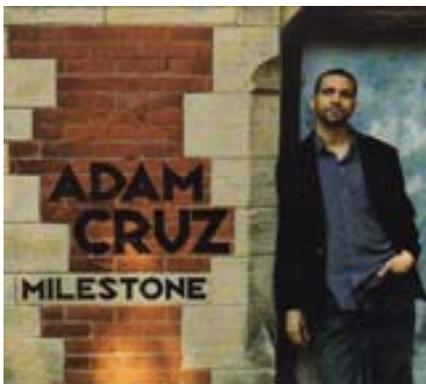
(Nelis Music Production)



This debut by the Tampa, Florida-based Boricua songstress Vanelis Vázquez showcases the excellent vocal skills and musical talents of this young ready-to-rock artist. Recorded in Kissimmee under the musical direction of bassist Joe Sandoz, Vanelis is surrounded by some of the top studio musicians of the area and was fortunate to obtain excellent arrangements by Héctor Javier Cruz, Will Velez, and Gino Picart. The set veers from tasty salsa tracks and Latin pop scores to romantic ballads and pop-anthems such as the title track *Esa Soy Yo*. Vanelis' vocals shine throughout the eleven tracks, feeling comfortably at home regardless of what style or form of music she's performing. Most of the selections deliver brilliantly executed choruses and powerful percussions led by Héctor Javier Cruz on trap drums together with percussionists David González "El Nene" and Cuquito Reyes. Kudos to guitarist Frankie González for putting the final touches on most of the tracks. Highlights of the recording include the opening track *Como Lo Extraño* (salsa version) composed by Daniel Martin, and the Iann Roberto compositions *Esa Soy Yo*, and *Si No Me Amas* (salsa version). — *Rudy Mangual*

REVIEWS

ADAM CRUZ Milestone (Sunnyside)



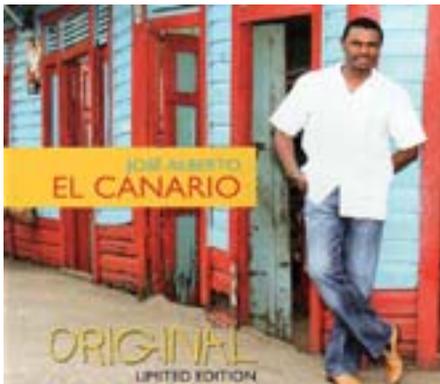
Facilitado por una dádiva generosa del Aaron Copland Recording Fund, el primer disco en solitario del distinguido baterista y compositor nuyorriqueño Adam Cruz consiste de ocho temas originales fundamentados en un formato moderno de sexteto jazzístico integrado por los siguientes elementos estelares: Edward Simón (piano y Fender Rhodes), Steve Cárdenas (guitarra eléctrica), Ben Street (bajo) y un par de saxofonistas rotativos —Miguel Zenón (alto) o Steve Wilson (soprano). A la edad de 40 años, la madurez musical de Cruz se pone de relieve en el inusual equilibrio establecido entre las piezas de mayor orientación rítmica (*Emjé*, *The Gadfly*) y aquellos numerosos enfocados en la libre improvisación (*Crepuscular*, *Magic Ladder*).

El CD *Milestone* refleja un factor significativo: Cruz forma parte de una generación de músicos estadounidenses de descendencia iberoamericana que cultivan el jazz, en lugar de una generación de músicos de “jazz latino”. De hecho, sólo se identifican un par de composiciones que contienen insinuaciones referentes a las raíces antillanas del protagonista debutante: la alusión velada de bomba puertorriqueña en el ritmo de *Outer Reaches* y la pauta briosa marcada por la cáscara (patrón rítmico ejecutado por el timbalero en la música cubana y sus derivados) en *Emjé*. —Luis Tamargo

JOSÉ ALBERTO (EL CANARIO)

Original

(Los Canarios Inc.)



With *Cada Uno Con Lo Suyo* —the charged-up opener composed by Ernesto Ramos and arranged by Ricky González—, veteran salsa vocalist José Alberto (El Canario) initiates his latest production, *Original*, which showcases some of his best work in recent years. As demonstrated on his duets with Gilberto Santa Rosa (on “Llegó el Sonero” (featuring a slamming arrangement penned by Louis García) and with Raulín Rosendo (on *Somos Dos*), El Canario’s throaty but flavorful vocals are at their best. He also exhibits a flamenco/gypsy singing flavor on the Ramón Orlando Valoy score *Qué Me Lo Cuente Otro*, while highlighting the amazing quality of his orchestra on the track *Canario Mambo Mix* (a tribute to the music of Pérez Prado and Tito Puente, directed and arranged by Ricky González). On the selection *Unidos* (penned by José Alberto), he surrounds himself with many of his Dominican compatriots, such as Michel Camilo, Santiago Cerón, Joseito Mateo, Asdrúbal, Cuco Valoy, Cheché Abreu, Henry García, Rey Reyes, José Bello, Dominic, and the group Sexappeal. Other favorite tracks include “La Calle” (arranged by Isidro Infante) and a tasty version of the Compay Segundo classic *Chan Chan* (brilliantly arranged by Ricky González, and featuring violinist Alfredo de la Fé and trumpeters José Jerez and Raúl Agraz). —*Rudy Mangual*

LATINEO
Two Ways
(Walboomers Music)



Led by drummer Mark de Jong, Latineo is a Latin jazz quartet from Holland founded in 2007. Titled *Two Ways*, the quartet's debut was recorded in Amsterdam's JVZ Studios during a two-day session conducted in April of 2010 under the musical direction of Marc Bischoff (a sought-after Dutch pianist/producer/composer/educator). Helping to shape the sound of the quartet are the Caracas-born bassist Yerman Aponte and the Cuban percussionist José "Pepe" Espinosa (of Issac Delgado, Bamboleo, Cubanismo!, and Afro-Cuban All-Stars fame). Saxophonist Efraín Trujillo is featured as special guest on the selections *Choices* and *Café Casino*. Elegant yet uneasy originals based on the Latin jazz traditions are combined with a few U.S. jazz standards (such as John Coltrane's *Naima*, and Lee Morgan's *Mr. Kenyatta*) in order to present an interesting repertoire, effectively delivered by this intellectually gifted group of jazzy rumberos from the Netherlands. Top picks include the opener titled *Choices*, plus *Framework* and *Viejo y Añejado*. —Rudy Mangual

Eliane Amherd
Now And From Now On
(ELI 2)



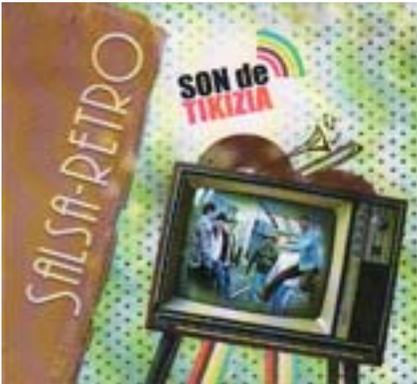
A native of Switzerland who currently resides in the Big Apple, singer/songwriter/guitarist/ arranger Eliane Amherd is a truly multifaceted artist. Check out her incomparable vocals, memorable lyrics, distinctive melodies, admirable guitar-playing skills, and cosmopolitan Pan-American/transatlantic approach throughout her entirely original repertoire, in which she successfully combines various U.S. forms with multiple Cuban/Caribbean and Brazilian rhythms, from the bold funk/soul impact of the opening title track (remixed at the end as the percussive section of an escola de samba) to the joyful calypso chorus of *Me Fe Tan Pliji* to the refined jazz atmosphere of *Where is Home*. Not to mention the delightful 1960s bossa sound of *Let Me Explain* or the graceful blues character of *Steady and Slow*.

Acclaimed as “a terrific guitarist” by the self-proclaimed cubano postizo (fake Cuban) Marc Ribot and hailed as “one of the very best singers in New York” by trumpeter Randy Brecker, Amherd is backed by a compatible crew comprised of two Brazilians (bassist Gustavo Amarante and percussionist Ze Mauricio) and two Afro-Americans (vibist Bill Ware and drummer Willard Dyson) with permanent domiciles in New York City.

In addition to the world’s finest watches and chocolate delicacies, whenever reference is made —now and from now on— to the impressive contributions made by the native Alpine nation of William Tell, one must acknowledge the peculiar musical artistry of Eliane Amherd. —*Luis Tamargo*

SON DE TIKIZIA

Salsa-Retro (Hooters)



Paying tribute to the tradition of “salsa dura” (a term used to refer to the early compositions and hardcore tendencies that erupted during the “salsa explosion” of the early 1970s in New York City and Puerto Rico), the Costa Rican salsa band called Son de Tikizia is triumphant in its undertaking by revisiting salsa hits such as *Perico*, *Mamagüela*, *El Negro Bembón*, *El Nazareno*, *Anacaona*, and *Indestructible* (arranged in various medleys), while offering some original salsa dura scores. The recording was produced by Son de Tikizia’s co-leaders: pianist/flutist Walter Flores and vocalist/trombonist Alfredo Poveda. This trombone-fueled ensemble, enhanced with a rock-solid rhythm section and excellent vocals, swings non-stop through all nine tracks. Kudos to Pangui Mora for his tasty timbal and bongó work, as well as to Alfredo Poveda and Walter Flores for their consistent musical vision. —*Rudy Mangual*