

Reviews ⊕⊕⊕

MAY 2011 ISSUE

PICK OF THE MONTH

CHOCO ORTA

Choco Swing

(Chocolocochon Bolsillo Productions)



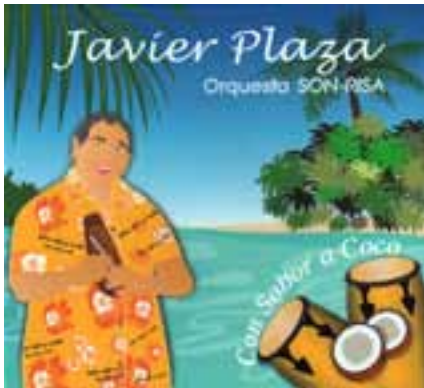
Boricua multi-talented Choco Orta returns to the airwaves and dance floors via her latest recording *Choco Swings*, a production that marks her artistic debut as a producer. The talented singer/percussionist/dancer and actress continues to develop, excel and shine artistically throughout most of this new recording. Choco opens her dance party with the title track *Choco Swing* (a Gino Meléndez composition arranged by Ricky Zayas), an upbeat dance-friendly ditty displaying her savvy sonera skills and percussion talents, taking on a flavorful conga solo. She pays tribute female warriors on the self-penned composition *Homenaje a las Soneras*, featuring a commendable arrangement by bassist Máximo Rodríguez. Perhaps Choco should have showcased an all-female ensemble on this selection to reinforce the girl power. The production was recorded in Puerto Rico under the musical direction and piano of Willie Sotelo and featuring the talents of William “Kachiro” Thompson (congas), Tito De Gracia (bongo/timbal), and Pedro Pérez (bass). Featured on choruses are Jerry Rivas, Henry Santiago and Rei Peña. Other favorite tracks include *La Voz del Pueblo*, and *Cuidate de la Lengua*. Overall, this latest by Choco is a powerful musical expression from a veteran and complete artist. Chocolicious. —*Rudy Mangual*

REVIEWS

JAVIER PLAZA & ORQUESTA SON-RISA

Con Sabor a Coco

(Javier Plaza Production)

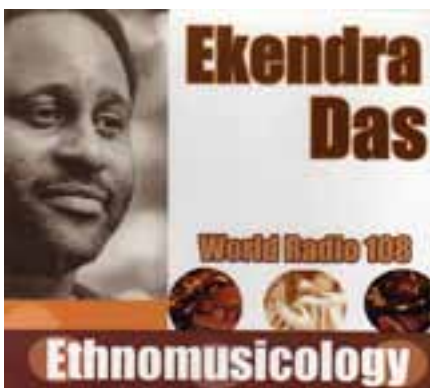


Featuring various Venezuelan musicians based in Paris and Amsterdam, “Con Sabor a Coco” is the fifth recording led by the composer/vocalist Javier Plaza. This collection of sones montunos, chachachás, guaguancós and danzones (mostly penned by Plaza), highlights the talents of these Venezuelans musicians exiled in Europe. Joining Plaza on vocals on the selection *Pal’ Sonero Mayor* (a tribute to the late Ismael Rivera) are Carlos “Kutimba” Sposito and Carlos Petters. The renowned percussionists Orlando Poleo and Marco Toro are also featured in this recording, which contains valuable arrangements contributed by Mauricio Coppola, Gerardo Chacón, and Julio Font. Javier Plaza and Orquesta Son-Risa are at their best on the title track (*Con Sabor a Coco*), as well as on “Disfraz de Rojo” and *Pal’ Sonero Mayor*, consistently displaying solid grooves and harmonious vocal choruses. —*Rudy Mangual*

EKENDRA DAS & WORLD RADIO 108

Ethnomusicology

(Kari-On Productions)



Ethnomusicology marks the introduction, as producer and composer, of the veteran New York City-based percussionist Ekendra Das. Spanning 25 years, Ekendra’s musical career includes collaborations with Harry Belafonte, Havana Select, Dizzy Gillespie, Susana Baca and Chucho Valdés, as well as his function as member of the soul/jazz/world music ensemble “Fertile Ground” during the last seven years. On the CD “Ethnomusicology”, Ekendra delivers scores and arrangements inspired by the musical cultures of Africa, India, Europe, South America and the Caribbean, backed by “World Radio 108” (a

collective of musicians from various cultural backgrounds, united by the common interest of making inspiring music, without any limits or boundaries). Ekendra's seductive rhythms and grooves paint a musical landscape that serves as the soundtrack for inspirational lyrics and spoken word, while worldly melodies extracted from compatible realities dance to the beat of the drums. Favorite tracks include *Orisha* (Yorubá, *Ifa Palo Lukumi*), *MPM*, and *Radio World*. —*Rudy Mangual*

CINTRON BAND

Live / Manteca
(Cintron Band)



Recorded live at The Mohegan Sun Hotel and Casino in 2006, this recording captures the New Jersey-based band Cintron at their best. Led, produced and arranged by timbalero Edgardo A. Cintrón, this big band composed of five horn players, three percussionists, three vocalists, piano, bass and guitar, plays a balanced mix of salsa, Latin jazz, and popular dance music capable of pleasing most audiences. The highlights of this live performance are the selections *Manteca* (Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo classic), *Vamonos Pal Monte* (Eddie Palmieri composition), and the Tito Puente classic *Picadillo*. Closing the recording is a 2010 studio recording bonus track of the Michael Jackson mega-hit *Human Nature* arranged to a salsa style with bilingual lyrics. There are praiseworthy solos throughout this live performance by Edgardo Cintrón (timbal), Angel Velez (trumpet), and David Colón (piano/keyboards). —*Rudy Mangual*

GREGOR HUEBNER

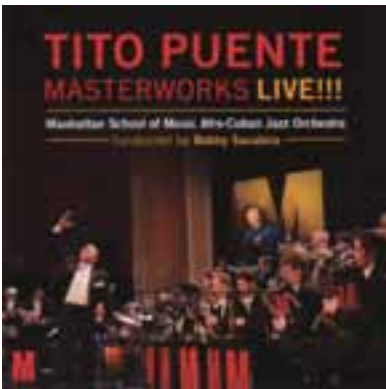
El Violin Latino
(Peregrina Music)



German Gregor Huebner arrived in the Big Apple in 1994 in the pursuit of expanding his knowledge of jazz. But what he developed was an immediate passion for Latin American music. This new

recording features the New York City-based Huebner performing with three different groups that create a musical triangle between Cuba, Argentina and Brazil. The Cuban ensemble includes Karen Joseph (flute), Klaus Mueller (piano), Rubén Rodríguez (bass), and a percussion section led by Johnny Almendra (timbal). The band's main contributions to the repertoire include the opening track *El Huerfanito*, the title track *The Latin Violin* (dedicated to the late Graciela), and *Cuban Gypsy*. The Tango Ensemble is a quartet featuring Raúl Jaurena (bandoneon), Octavio Brunetti (piano) and bassist Pedro Giraudo. The tango scores include *Michelangelo*, *Milonga del Angel* and *Hermanos*. The Brazilian band features Portinho (drums), Klaus Mueller (piano) and Lincoln Goines (bass). Brazilian tracks include the selections *Dream Between*, *Apanthei-te Cavaquinho*, *Passarim* and *Hindsight*. Huebner's East-European folk and gypsy music roots fit perfectly with the rhythms of Latin America. —*Rudy Mangual*

BOBBY SANABRIA & THE MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC
AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA
Tito Puente Masterworks Live!!!
(Jazzheads)



Bandleader/drummer/percussionist/educator Bobby Sanabria conducts the Manhattan School of Music Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra in a tribute to the music and genius of the late Ernest Anthony Puente, Jr. better known to the world as Tito Puente. Recorded live on November 3, 2008 at the John C. Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, this Latin big band extravaganza of amazing young lions of music take on a commanding repertoire of Maestro Puente's works, including the classics *Picadillo* and *Ran Kan Kan*, as well as other gems like *Elegua Changó*, *Mambo Buddha*, and *Cuban Nightmare*. The recording is full of explosive big band arrangements and virtuosic solos. Ironically, the Manhattan School of Music is housed in the original home of the Juilliard School of Music, where Tito Puente studied back in the mid-1940s. Huge props to Bobby Sanabria for a majestic work with these young musicians and for keeping Latin music roots alive. —*Rudy Mangual*

