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Reviews

JUNE/JULY 2012 ISSUE

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PICK OF THE MONTH

DON SONERO

La Verdadera Escena
(AINAFF Inc.)

A native of the Bronx, New York, Gilberto Velázquez (aka Don Sonero), has released his bandleading debut, coproduced by Velázquez and Adán Pérez. Boasting a vibrant, fresh salsa style that echoes influences ranging from Fania All-Stars to Rubén Blades & Son del Solar, Don Sonero offers a dance-friendly repertoire of mostly original scores brilliantly arranged by pianists Adán Pérez and Efraín “Junito” Dávila, as well as Willy Torres and Iván Heredia. Don Sonero’s vocals cook with intensity while delivering playful improvisations, backed by a powerhouse band of top-notch players from the Big Apple and commendable background vocals contributed by Willy Torres, Eddie Rosado, and Danny Pérez, among others. The renowned salsa trombonist Jimmy Bosch is featured on the opening track (“Don Sonero Llegó”), and joins bongocero Johnny “Dandy” Rodríguez on the selection titled “Apriétame La Mano.” The band’s timbalero, Daniel Antonetti applies his rapping skills to the track “Todas Las Mujeres”. Other favorites include the tunes “Salsa Pura y Nada Más,” “Son Son Sonero,” and “Sabor Clásico” (with great percussion work from “Los Mafiosos” —Erik Piza, Daniel Antonetti, and Ito Arguinzoni). —*Rudy Mangual*



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Quicktime

Chico Álvarez

El Indio Caonabo

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REVIEWS

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Paint the Rhythm
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Human Nature
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Rolando Sanchez
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Steve Pouchie
Watch Ur Wallet
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Somos Son
Bilongo

LISETT MORALES

La Mulata del Sabor

(Artist System)

A native of Havana, Cuba, Lisett Morales unveils her latest recording "La Mulata del Sabor," produced by Marlow Rosado and Isidro Infante (not to be confused with her 2002 debut with Septeto Ahí Na'Má, also titled "La Mulata del Sabor"). Her sultry, powerful, and soulful alto sets her apart from most female vocalists in the Latin music world, even though she has been compared by many to the late Celia Cruz (whom Morales had the honor of portraying in the musical "Celia —The Life and Music of Celia Cruz"). In addition to fronting the "Celia Cruz All-Stars," Morales has shared the stage with the likes of Isidro Infante, India, José Alberto "El Canario," Albita, Issac Delgado, and Marlow Rosado, to mention but a few.

This new recording includes six original scores by Morales, two Spanish-language versions of the Etta James classic "At Last" (Al Fin), a tribute to Celia Cruz titled "Medley de Celia," some bachatas, and lots of good dance music. Favorite tracks include "Karma," "Vive La Vida," and the title track "La Mulata del Sabor."

—*Rudy Mangual*



WALDO VALENZUELA

The Light of the Sixth Sun

(Waldoval Entertainment)

The Chilean, L.A.-based guitarist/sound engineer/music producer Waldo Valenzuela releases his third bandleading CD "The Light of the Sixth Sun." This self-taught guitarist lays down a vibrant, self-produced repertoire of original jazz-fusion scores. Backed by a distinguished cast of players from Los Angeles and other locations, Valenzuela displays his talents across various musical territories, from smooth jazz to contemporary fusion to world music modalities. Brilliant breaks, drops, and solos placed at appropriate spots throughout the selections by Valenzuela and his accomplices make for a pleasant and distinctive listening experience. Favorite tracks include the hard-edge "Prodigy," the funky "Seven Seas," and the jazzy "Hotel Camarillo." —*Rudy Mangual*



CANDI SOSA

Faded Blue Jeans

(Selfish Recordings)

Los Angeles-based Cuban songstress Candi Sosa unveils the other side of her musical passion by interpreting songs from the



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The Estrada Brothers

Mr. Ray

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Quicktime**

Manny Silvera

Bassed in America

**Windows Media
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mainstream popular songbook that she grew up listening to, particularly after her arrival in the United States of America. Known for her passionate renditions of Latin American standards and contemporary songs, Sosa shows that she is just as much at home performing the pop classics of Janis Joplin and Kris Kristofferson, among others, as well as her own English-language compositions. While most of the tracks in this production are in English, Sosa's Latin flavor is all over the place. All songs were produced, recorded, and performed by the "Spellbound" boys —Paul "Pablo" Thomas (keyboards, piano, guitars, percussions, and background vocals) and Bobby Moon (organ, keyboards, percussion, harmonica, and background vocals) — while Candi Sosa handled all the lead and background vocals, and played 6 and 12 string guitars and percussion. Highlighting the recording are the selections "Piece of My Heart/Santa Isabel," "Me & Bobby McGee," and the Latin blues-flavored "Let Me Go," and "Caribbean Blue." —*Rudy Mangual*

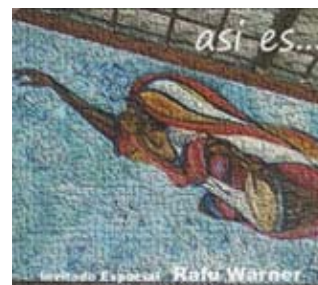


CONJUNTO PUERTO RICO

Así Es...

(Conjunto Puerto Rico)

Simple, raw, hardcore salsa is what Conjunto Puerto Rico cooks with intensity in its new recording, led by pianist/arranger/composer Kevin Figueroa. This two-trumpet conjunto takes on a repertoire of dance-friendly scores by playing sones montunos, guaguancós, merengues, and boleros, all under the clear Caribbean sky of Puerto Rico. Featured vocalists include Rafu Warner and Paquito Agosto, as well as killer choruses from the band, properly applied to excellent originals, tailor-made for this ensemble by Kevin Figueroa and Pepe Rios. This is one of the best-sounding conjuntos I have heard in recent years. Standouts tracks include "Tres Razas," "Todo o Nada," and "Para Que Cante El Sonero". —*Rudy Mangual*

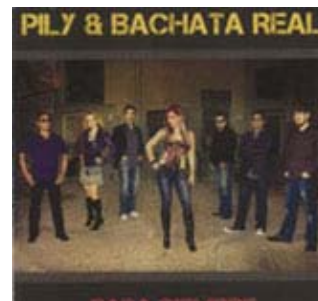


PILY & BACHATA REAL

Para Siempre

(Pily Music)

Established in January 2011 as "Hugo y Pily con Bachata Real," this group originally featured the combined vocal and writing talents of Hugo Bernal Estrada and Adelaide "Pily" Benavides, creating a new bachata sound which they often described as "west coast-style". Pily and the band keep their dream alive and pay homage to Hugo (who passed away in December, 2011) on this new production titled "Para Siempre." Fronted by Pily as lead vocalist and musical director, Bachata Real is comprised of Jorge Cabrera (guitar), Aaron Barnes (bass), Jeff Mikusky (keyboards), Ilona



Geller (strings), and percussionists Giovanni García and David Rodríguez. Guest vocalists include Don Iván and the late Hugo Bernal Estrada. The recording features bachata versions of pop classics such as “Every Breath You Take” (Sting), “Killing Me Softly” (Fox, Gimbel), and “It Will Rain” (Mars), as well as original scores penned by Estrada and Benavides. Check out the new “west coast-style bachata”! —*Rudy Mangual*

PAPA SIEMPRE

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