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## AUGUST 2010 ISSUE

# Columns ⊕ ⊕ ⊕

## QUÉ PASA IN LA

By Rudy Mangual

*While the salsa and Latin jazz music scene worldwide is at a lull, in Los Angeles a new salsa band or Latin jazz group seems to sprout just about every week. With literally dozens of bands competing daily for a few local gigs, the competition is stiff and promotions are very important for the survival of live music. The popularity of salsa keeps the salsa dance clubs open and the bands working alongside the DJs. Latin jazz groups are limited to performances in festivals*



(Pictured above: La Excelencia)

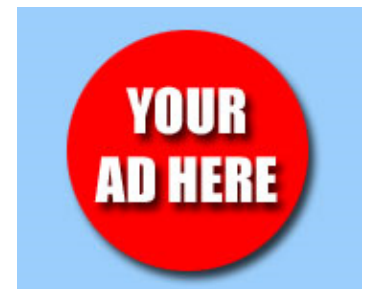
*and fairs, and they compete as well with jazz groups in the local jazz club scene. In the end, both salseros and jazzistas are able to co-exist in a city where live music and art performances are still considered a special treat and an art form.*

Live music around town includes: Grammy-nominated vocalist-composer **Perla Batalla** at the Ford Amphitheater in Hollywood on August 1st; **Pete Escovedo Latin Jazz Band** at Hollywood and Highland on August 3rd; **Conjunto Costazul** at The Autry on August 5th; **Rudy Regalado** at LA Farmers Market on August 6th; **Johnny Polanco y su Conjunto Amistad** at Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City on August 6th; **Adonis Puentes** at LACMA on August 7th; **Bobby Matos & His Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble** at the Santa Monica City Hall on August 6th;



**Luis Gonzáles**  
Si Te Prequantan  
[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

**Rolando Sanchez**  
Vamonos De Fiesta



[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

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**Steve Pouchie**  
Watch Ur Wallet  
[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

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**José Luis Morán**  
La Rumba del Barrio  
[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

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**3D Ritmo de Vida**  
Que Siga La Rumba  
[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

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**Somos Son**  
Bilongo  
[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

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**The Estrada Brothers**  
Mr. Ray  
[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

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**Manny Silvera**  
Bassed in America  
[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

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**Bobby Matos**  
Cuchy Frito Man  
[Windows Media](#)  
[Quicktime](#)

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**Chembo Corniel**  
Buena Gente  
[Windows Media](#)

**Orquesta Son Mayor** at The Autry at Griffith Park on August 12th; **Mongorama** at LACMA on August 14th; **Lucky 7 Mambo** at Hollywood and Highland on August 17th; **Perico Hernández and Son de Tierra** at The Autry in Griffith Park on August 19th; directly from New York City **Grupo Latin Vibe** at the Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City on August 20th; directly from Miami **Alfredo De La Fé** at LACMA on August 21st; **Johnny Polanco y su Conjunto Amistad** at The Autry in Griffith Park on August 26th; Grammy winner **Oscar Hernández and the L.A./N.Y. Connection** at LACMA on August 28th; **Susie Hansen Latin Band** at LACMA on September 4th; **Frank Cano and Latin Groove** at the L.A. Farmers Market on September 9th; and **Angel Lebron y Sabor Latino** at the Sportsmen's Lodge on September 10th.

Other special events in town include: directly from New York City the Los Angeles debut of the salsa band **La Excelencia** at the Skirball Cultural Center on August 12th. The group **Los Adolescentes** will take the stage of The Conga Room on August 12th at L.A. Live. "**Concierto El Rey — Homenaje a José Alfredo Jiménez**" is a tribute to the foremost composer of ranchera music on August 14th at the Ford Amphitheater. Salsa superstar **Oscar D'León** will be appearing at The Mayan in Downtown L.A. on August 19th. "**Fiesta Argentina 2010 Tango, Canción de Buenos Aire**" takes place on August 21st at the Ford Amphitheater in Hollywood. Local female percussionist/bandleader Melena will be performing at Manhattan Beach Summer Concert Series at Polliwog Park on August 22nd. Cuban salsa superstar **Issac Delgado** will be performing at The Conga Room on September 9th.

Continue supporting all your local artists and their venues. Live music rules! Peace.



## A BITE FROM THE APPLE

By Vicki Solá

Summer in The Apple ends with a bang! The **10th Annual NYC Salsa Congress**, slated for the Labor Day weekend at the New York Hilton, opens with SonSublime and Conjunto Imagen (Sept. 2nd) and also features Son Boricua (Sept. 3rd), salsa songstress Yoko (Sept. 4th), and El Gran Combo (Sept. 5th). The Congress wraps up the next day with a Farewell Salsa Cruise, featuring Grupo Latin Vibe on board. This vibraphone-driven band also headlines the **1st Annual Hotlanta Salsa Congress**, to be conducted from October 1st to October 3rd at Atlanta's Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Information about both congress festivities is available at [www.nycsalsacongress.com](http://www.nycsalsacongress.com) and [www.hotlantasalsacongress.com](http://www.hotlantasalsacongress.com).

Congrats to **3D Ritmo de Vida**, whose song titled *Mi Amor, Tu Volverás* was used on *Dancing with the Stars* and in a televised biography of Catherine Zeta Jones.

**DJ Jeff's "Hot Pick of the Month": Susie Hansen's *No Te Metas Conmigo*.**

## Quicktime

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### Maña

Tranquilito

[Windows Media](#)

[Quicktime](#)

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### Santiago Ceron

Besos de Hada

[Windows Media](#)

[Quicktime](#)

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### Johnny Polanco y Su

Conjunto Amistad

El Gusto de Mi Salsa

[Windows Media](#)

[Quicktime](#)

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### Siempre Salsa All Stars

Salsa Para Siempre

[Windows Media](#)

[Quicktime](#)

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With deep sadness, I report **DJ René Santiago's** untimely passing on May 24th, at the age of fifty. Along with DJ Jeff Stennet (his longtime friend and business partner), Santiago formed the "Afro-Boricua Connection" that hosted Friday Night After-Work at Windows Over Harlem, and most recently, at El Morocco. He was well respected by his peers, and clientele, and New York's musicians. Santiago was a superb DJ and a devoted family man. I extend my condolences to his loved ones and to his associates.

"I met DJ René Santiago about fifteen years ago," remembers DJ Jeff. "There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about him. He was and remains my best friend, my 'brother from another mother,' and my partner. He will always be in my heart and will be truly missed."

**Laser luster...** (Pictured above, Jesus Serrano/Najem Photography) Vocalist **Jesús "Chuti" Serrano** (who worked for eleven years with Conjunto Imagen) has released the CD *Ritmo, Sabor, y Melodia*, featuring arrangements by Efraín "Junito" Dávila, Lucho Cueto, Pedro Bermúdez, René Leyva, José Tabares and Willie Ruiz.

Born in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, Serrano came to the mainland at the age of eight, when his family settled in Paterson, New Jersey. "Paterson, with its many Puerto Ricans, was 'Salsa City,' with weekly rumbones at the East Side and Roberto Clemente parks", says Serrano. "Some of the musicians who came to jam became famous — Frankie Ruiz, Junito Ruiz, Domingo Quiñones, Atiliano "Papo" Bonilla, Félix Ortíz, Fonzy Cruz (Charlie Cruz's father), Luis Periquito, and Nelson "Aceite" Román.

The son of a percussionist, Serrano began playing congas at the age of ten, and by the age of sixteen, he was already performing with Max Hernández's orchestra. He went on to work with Orquesta Tabú, Orquesta Mayoral, Conjunto Guayacán, and Félix Ortíz y su Sexteto Tropical. "While I had a passion for percussion," he recalls, "I'd always have something to do with the creation of some of the bands' songs."

When an injury to Serrano's right forearm prevented him from playing, he honed his vocal and writing skills. A couple of years after recording with Charlie López's orchestra on *De Nuevo*,





Serrano joined Conjunto Imagen, for whom he sang and wrote songs, collaborating on many of Imagen's recording projects, such as *Por Amor a Ti*, *Imagen '97*, *Encuentro Especial*, *Imagen Navideña*, *Entrando al Milenio*, *Contra La Fuerza* and *Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana*. He composed the tunes *Huracán de Amor*, *No Puedo Más*, *Como Quisiera*, *Encuentro Especial*, *Rumores*, *Confusión*, *Bachata* and *¿Qué Tiene Esa Mujer?*

In 2008, Serrano left Imagen. "I started writing songs and creating new melodies that were somewhat different, but maintained the roots of our founding fathers of salsa", Serrano says. "Along with my friend, José Tabares, one of the best bass players of this era, I put together nine songs for my production." Eight of them are entirely Serrano originals.

Serrano's sidemen include the bass-playing producer Tabares, Néstor Milanés (piano and synthesizer), Carlos "Chino" García (congas), Carlito Soto (bongó), Bobby Allende (timbal), Manuel "Maneco" Ruiz (trumpet), and José Cruz (trombone).

**From Puerto Rico to New York...** Trumpeter and Ray Barretto alumni **Luis González** presents his production *Tributo a Un Gigante*, featuring guest artists Adalberto Santiago, Paquito Guzmán, and Luis "Perico" Ortíz. This is salsa the way it's meant to be, in my opinion. (A copy of this disc permanently resides in my car's CD player.)

Around town... Led by Santos Torres, Santos & the Romantic Four-Plus play for free every weekend, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, on Coney Island's Boardwalk, at West 15th Street, dishing up salsa, Latin soul, and oldies.

Born in Lajas, Puerto Rico, Santos — who has been playing the Boardwalk for twenty-eight years — has also performed alongside Johnny Pacheco (at the Palladium), Joe Cuba, Sam Cooke (at the Apollo Theater), Gladys Knight and the Pips, Ricardo Ray, and the Heartbeats.



Fifteen years ago, Santos began helping to maintain a large community garden in Coney Island, distributing fruits and vegetables to the community's needy population. He holds the unpaid position of Caretaker of the Santos-White Community Garden, and has received various awards from the New York City Council and from the New York State Assembly.

¡Hasta la próxima!



## LB MUSIC UPDATE

**By Nelson Rodríguez**

One group that should generate quite a few hits is **Orquesta La Paz**. This 1970s Philadelphia band (currently led by Víctor Aday) is back with a new cast and an awesome CD, *Deja Vu*, which is dedicated to the band's founder and former leader, Julio C. Marrero (who passed away in 2001) and includes the tunes *Cinco Años en Europa*, *Para Comerte a Besos*, *Charanga Pa' Gozar*, *Con Alma*, *Vida y Corazón*, *Jimmy a Every Which a Way*, and the closing jam titled *Vas a Querer Volver*.

**Dante Vargas** is one of the premier trumpet players from Colombia, and his name can be found on many CDs recorded in the past five years. Leading "The Cat Band" Vargas offers a great CD titled *Mis Raíces*, featuring a whole new generation of musicians destined for fabulous careers. The possible hits come at you, one after another: *Soy La Luz*, *Te Vas*, *La Guarapachanga*, *Miguelito*, *Primer Amor* and *Los Ratones Forman Fiesta*. Add a few guests like Isaac Delgado, Alberto Barros and Charlie Cardona, and you have a winner.

Two of my favorite vinyl recordings are out on CD format and already spinning during my radio shows. One is *Celia & Johnny*, with the classics *Químbara*, *Toro Mata* and *Lo Tuyo Es Mental*. The other is **Joe Cuba's** *We Must Be Doing Something Right*, containing the hits *El Pito*, *Y Tu Abuela ¿Dónde Está?* *Clave Mambo*, *Pruebalo* and *My Wonderful You*.

**Conjunto Costazul** has been hitting the pavement in the West Coast for many years and has finally delivered a recording of its live sets simply titled *Live in Los Angeles, 2009* that features the bands led by Freddie and Johnny Crespo. You'll enjoy some fine L.A. Latin sounds, including a couple of covers from the Libre vault (*No Vuelvo Contigo* and *Por qué Tú Sufres*) and Raulín's *Mama Vieja*.

Vibist **Steve Pouchie**, a staple of the New York scene for many years, presents his sophomore release, *El Puente* (The Bridge), featuring Andrea Brachfeld, Johnny Rivero, Iván Renta, Pete Nater and Jotan Afanador. I truly enjoyed Pouchie's original compositions, as well as the covers of *Picadillo* (with Ronnie Puente on marimba), *Take Five* and *Green Dolphin Street*.

**Susie Hansen's** group, one of the hardest working bands of the past decade, continues to release outstanding music, as exemplified by her latest CD, *Susie Hansen — Representante De La Salsa*, with the support of the following sidemen: George Balmaseda, Joe Rotondi, René Camacho, Joey de León, Tiki Pasillas, David Stout and Jimmy Branly. She has a little bit of

everything on this CD, including *Frank Sinatra's Cha- Cha-Chá* and the salsified version of the classic pop song titled *Vehicle* (previously latinized by Carlos Oliva & Los Sobrinos del Juez, back in the 1980s).

**Jaja Matsimela**, a band led by a percussionist called Kwasi, blends the flavors of Africa, Brazil, Cuba and the rest of Caribbean with Delta blues, New York jazz, and Soul sounds from Motown and Philly on the CD *Blues Sauce*.

Pianist **Héctor Martignón** has established himself as one of today's finest pianists, as illustrated by his eight-year association with Ray Barretto's New World Spirit. Martignón's latest CD, *Second Chance*, takes a second look at his previous hits and features a fine band comprised of Samuel Torres, Ludwig Alfonso, Armando Gola, Xavier Pérez, John Walsh, with the additional support provided by the following guests: Edmar Castañeda (harp), Tim Collins (vibes) and Vinny Valentino (guitar).

Saxophonist **Scott Martin** is no surprise to our readers. His hard-working West Coast group, the Scott Martin Band (with special guest Justo Almarino) delivers top-notch sounds on the CD *Only Trust Your Heart*, a wonderful journey through the exquisite sounds of Brazil.

Recorded by **David Lucca & his Salzón Jazz**, the CD *David's Dream* is a surprising mix of salsa and Latin jazz comprised mostly of compositions penned by Lucca and Luis Disla. As a percussionist Lucca had worked with various bands in Ponce (Puerto Rico), Denver (Colorado) and New York City, but now resides in Florida. Ray Vega appears as special guest on two of the Latin jazz tracks!

**Fiesta Orchestra** is led by vocalist Jorge Laureano, who shares vocal duties with Lee Malavet, while accompanied by various such veteran musicians (Rubén Rodríguez, Eric Vélez, Ray Colón, Raúl Agraz, John Walsh, Ricardo Pons, etc) on the CD *Me Está Gustando* (I'm Enjoying It).

#### **Sonora Carruseles**

(pictured above), while making various changes to its lineup, has developed a sound of its own that is easily recognizable. In its latest CD, *Masters of Hard Salsa*, Sonora Carruseles continues its successful voyage, as demonstrated on the tracks *Quinto y Trompeta*, *Rey Piano*, *Taco de Ojo*, *Mosaico Santero* and *Camina Como Chencha*. Congratulations to Dante





Vargas, who functions as the band's musical director and trumpet soloist.



## DESDE BORINQUEN

Por Elmer González

Fotos © Miguel Rojas

### CELEBRACIÓN DE CENTENARIO FOLKLÓRICO

Del 8 al 11 de julio se celebró el centenario del natalicio de **Rafael Cepeda Brenes** (conocido como "El Patriarca de la Bomba Puertorriqueña") en la Plaza del Quinto Centenario ubicada en la parte alta del Viejo San Juan, contando con el fondo marítimo del Atlántico y muy cerca al Castillo del Morro.

Fue un regalo al pueblo de la Fundación Rafael Cepeda que preside **Jesús Cepeda**, junto a la asesora cultural **Gilda Hernández**. Un suculento banquete audiovisual en el que participaron múltiples colectivos de danzas folklóricas y modernas que abarcaron una amplia gama de estilos y formas ejecutadas por un total de 22 agrupaciones musicales.

Los ritmos de la bomba resonaron con fuerza a través de los barriles (tambores) desplegados por



las siguientes agrupaciones:  
**Gracimá, Ballet Folklórico  
 Hermanos Ayala, Papo  
 Alers & Yagüembé, Isabel  
 Albizu & Bambalué,  
 Terraplén y "Bomba Jazz"**  
 (con Furito Ríos, junto al  
 Grupo Nacional Hermanos  
 Cepeda).



La plena puso a bailar a todos, con la participación de **Plena Libre, Pleneros de Severo, Tito Matos, Plenéalo, Petra Cepeda & Señora Plena y Grupo Atabal.**

La agrupación del maestro **José Ramírez** recreó los cantos y toques de batá que caracterizan a las religiones de origen yoruba. Las diferentes variantes bailables de la rumba se manifestaron a través de **Papo Cadena & Rumba Raza.**

Para marcar contrastes sonoros, la tarima se llenó de música sinfónica mediante el repertorio latinoamericano interpretado por la **Orquesta Sinfónica de Bayamón** y por la prestigiosa **Orquesta Filarmónica de Puerto Rico Arturo Somohano.**

La salsa estuvo bien representada por **La Sonora Ponceña** y por **Jesús Cepeda y su Grupo ABC**, quienes incluyeron una porción del repertorio de Rafael Cortijo. El pianista **Eric Figueroa** presentó varios temas del cancionero romántico boricua dentro del contexto de un cuarteto de jazz. La música jíbara se manifestó en grande a través de los trovadores y las cuerdas de **Mapeyé** (con Antonio Cabán Vale, alias "El Topo", como invitado especial).

Se destacó el lazo cultural con el continente africano a través de los tambores y bailes del grupo **Cheikh M'Baye & Sing Sing Rythms and Dance**, importado directamente de Senegal.

También acudieron un gran número de artesanos que exhibieron sus creaciones en el Cuartel de Ballajá, en donde se realizó al mismo tiempo una exposición del pintor **Pablo Marcano.**

Este evento marcó el inicio de otras actividades similares que se estarán presentando más adelante en varios pueblos de la isla para conmemorar el centenario de Rafael Cepeda, quien nació el 10 de julio de 1910 en el barrio Puerta de Tierra de San Juan y murió en la misma ciudad el 21 de julio de 1996.

Cepeda y sus familiares fueron los promotores más destacados de los ritmos de la bomba puertorriqueña durante el siglo pasado. Este compositor y bailarín de bomba, al igual que su esposa Caridad Brenes y sus hijos, promovieron con gran orgullo los ritmos autóctonos de



Borinquen en una época en que peligraba la existencia de la bomba.

Entre sus más de 500 composiciones musicales se destacan *El bombón de Elena*, *Habla Cuenbé*, *A la verdegué* y *Flores de amistad*. Su legado y su entusiasmo por el folklor afroborinqueño se mantienen vigentes gracias a la labor de la Fundación Folklórica-Cultural Rafael Cepeda, establecida en el 1996.



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