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## Reviews

### OCTOBER 2011 ISSUE

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#### PICK OF THE MONTH

#### MARACA AND HIS LATIN JAZZ ALL STARS Reencuentros (Descarga Sar1)

Recorded live at El Gran Teatro de La Habana's García Lorca Concert Hall (in Havana, Cuba) on January 12, 2010, the latest offering of bandleader/flutist/composer Orlando Valle, better known as "Maraca" takes us on a journey of the 20th Century's music of Cuba and the Caribbean. Armed with his magical flute, Maraca is accompanied by an all-star cast drawn from the world of Latin jazz: Horacio "El Negro" Hernández (drums), Giovanni Hidalgo (congas, timbal, batá), David Sánchez (sax), Hugh Fraser (trombone), Harold López-Nussa (piano), Feliciano Arango (bass), Julio Padrón (trumpet), Yusef Díaz (keyboards), Enrique Lazaga (güiro), and Sayaka (violin), plus the participation of Orquesta de Cámara de La Habana (Havana Chamber Orchestra). Maraca revisits classics such as Camerata en Guaguancó (a Guido López-Gavilán composition), Serenata Cubana (an Ignacio Cervantes piece), and the Latin jazz anthem Manteca hereby offering one of the best contemporary version of this Pozo/Gillispie classic, performed by a quartet comprised of congas, drums, bass, and flute. As a matter of fact, Maraca shines on his flutes throughout most of this concert, as well as via his original scores, including the standouts Afro, Danzón Siglo XXI, and Nueva Era, but it's his vision of this unique production that truly sets him apart from many of his peers. Handsomely packaged, this new CD is accompanied by a DVD of the actual concert in Havana. Indeed, one of the top ten CDs of the year in the Latin jazz category. —*Rudy Mangual*



#### REVIEWS

**Windows Media  
Quicktime**

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**Luis González**  
Spain  
**Windows Media  
Quicktime**

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**Rolando Sanchez**  
Vamonos De Fiesta  
**Windows Media  
Quicktime**

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**Steve Pouchie**  
Watch Ur Wallet  
**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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**MICHEL CAMILO**  
**Mano a Mano**  
**(Decca/Universal Music Group International)**

El nuevo disco del incomparable pianista/compositor/arreglista dominicano Michel Camilo llega en un momento significativo, en un tiempo en que ciertos burócratas faranduleros que administran los Premios Grammy tratan de negar la significativa vigencia del jazz latino, como si este género híbrido hubiese desaparecido, por arte de magia, de la faz del planeta. Estableciendo una alianza potente con el travieso percusionista puertorriqueño Giovanni Hidalgo (también conocido entre sus colegas como "Mañenguito" y categorizado perfectamente por Nat Chediak en sus liner notes como "heredero de Tata Güines con seis congas a remolque") y el fenomenal bajista cubano Charles Flores (renombrado por su formidable técnica y conceptualidad armónica), Camilo expresa su virtuosismo enérgico y exuberante a través de ocho composiciones originales, dos estándares estadounidenses y hasta un "clásico" extraído del cancionero hispanoamericano (la sempiterna zamba argentina Alfonsina y el Mar). A veces feroz y a veces sutil, la creativa acometida pianística de Camilo se manifiesta lo mismo en la evocación del bugalú aplicada al estándar The Sidewinder o en la mezcla de samba y choro manifestada en No Left Turn (resaltando el pandeiro y tamborim de Mañenguito) que en el inesperado enredo armónico (con preludio de columbia afrocubana) de la artificiosa Rumba Pa'Ti. Como si todo esto fuera poco, Camilo explora las referencias musicales de su tierra natal mediante la exquisita aproximación bolerística de You and Me (tema definido por Camilo como "una bachata con traje de etiqueta") y el experimental merengue-jazz Rice and Beans. —*Luis Tamargo*



**MIGUEL ZENÓN**  
**Alma Adentro**  
**(Marsalis Music)**

This fifth bandleading recording by alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón finds the young Boricua fully emerged in the Puerto Rican songbook. Zenón brings new life to the music of Bobby Capó on the selections Juguete and Incomprendido, both brilliantly arranged by Zenón and orchestrated for large ensemble by Guillermo Klein. From composer Pedro Flores songbook, he selected the beautiful boleros Perdón and Amor, while from Rafael Hernández's arsenal, he chose Silencio and Perfume de Gardenia. The romantic title track, Alma Adentro, was written by Sylvia Rexach, who also penned another impressive love song selected by Zenón; Olas y Arenas. Completing the production are two tracks authored by another great Boricua composer, Tite Curet Alonso (Temes and Tiembles). But don't expect to sing along to these classics. While Zenón remains loyal to most of the main melodies and



**Chembo Corniel**  
Buena Gente  
**Windows Media**  
**Quicktime**

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**Maña**  
Tranquilito  
**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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respects many of the distinctive breaks and bridges of these musical gems, he also transforms them into amazing, moody experimentations with ample space for improvisation. Backed with profound eloquence by his quartet—featuring Luis Perdomo (piano), Hans Glawischnig (bass), and Henry Cole (drums);, Zenón also relies on the musical comfort provided by a large woodwind ensemble under the direction of Guillermo Klein. Once again, Zenón is in top form, and manages to deliver another dazzling performance. —*Rudy Mangual*

## **ARTHUR LIPNER & NANNY ASSIS**

### **Brasilian Vibes** (Mallet Works)

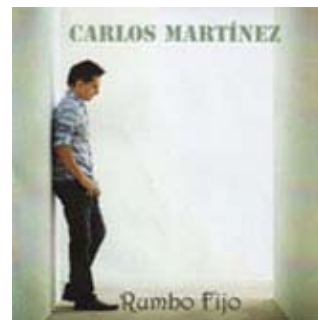
Recorded in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, New York City and Connecticut, *Brasilian Vibes* is Arthur Lipner's sixth bandleading production sharing the spotlight this time around with percussionist/vocalist/composer Nanny Assis. Their new production offers beautiful instrumental and vocal arrangements based on a landscape of rock-solid percussion grooves. Recognized as one of the world's top mallet players, Lipner delivers virtuosic craftsmanship on both vibes and marimbas, while Assis lays down tasteful percussive rhythms and colorful vocals, with the help of Vanessa Falabella, Danny Assis, and Kathy Caprino. Guest musicians in the recording include Wycliffe Gordon (trombone) and Vinicius Cantuaria (guitar). Favorite tracks include the opener (Brazil's Hold On Me), Tarde em Itapuã, and Four Brothers. —*Rudy Mangual*



## **CARLOS MARTÍNEZ**

### **Rumbo Fijo** (Coamito Music)

Baptized as “El Príncipe del Bajo” (The Prince of the Bass) in his native Puerto Rico, Carlos Martínez unveils his debut recording as a bandleader (*Rumbo Fijo*) in the company of his father (trumpeter Carlos “Coamito” Martínez, Sr.), and brother Carlos “Coamito” Martínez Jr., plus a handful of the island's top players. The younger Martínez started performing in his uncle's popular band (Lito Peña y La Orquesta Panamericana) on saxophone at age 15. Soon thereafter, he entered the Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico, majoring in music composition and contrabass. Throughout the last decade, he has performed and recorded with Lalo Rodríguez, Tito Rojas, Tito Nieves, Puerto Rican Power, Gilberto Santa Rosa, and Víctor Manuelle, to mention just a few. This new recording opens with a dance-friendly version of Adalberto Álvarez' y No Me Da La Cuenta, arranged by Carlos “Cuto” Soto and featuring Alexander López on lead vocals. Other standouts include *Isla Primorosa* (featuring Miguel Méndez on lead vocals), and the classic Frank Simón Damirón chachachá *No Está En Nada*. —*Rudy Mangual*



## CARLOS CASCANTE Y SU TUMBAO

### Hablando En Serio (Bettr Musik)

Representing Seattle, Washington, vocalist Carlos Cascante and his band (Cascante y su Tumbao) deliver their second CD production, *Hablando En Serio*. Basically organized as a sextet, these cats rock through original scores by Cascante and pianist Julio Jaúregui (Maria Esther, Tragedias, and Tremenda Sabrosura), as well as on cover versions of favorites such as *El Ciego* (Armando Manzanero) and *Usted Abusó* (Antonio Carlos-Jocafi), featuring Portuguese vocals on the latter by guest singer Makala Romero. Cascante (originally from Costa Rica) is a brilliant, seasoned vocalist/composer (currently performing with the popular Spanish Harlem Orchestra), who along with Julio Jaúregui (pianist/composer/arranger), comprises an amazing salsa music-making machine. Rounding out the sextet are Dean Schmidt (bass), Thomas Marriott (trumpet), Edsson Otero (congas), and Jeff Busch (drums). Other special guests in this recording include Luisito Quintero (congas/timbal), Paoli Mejías (congas/cajón/minor percussion), Miguel A. Valdés (trumpet), Ted Dortch (tenor sax), and Will Martin (trombone). —*Rudy Mangual*



## ETIENNE CHARLES

### Kaiso (Culture Shock Music)

Leading his own New York-based sextet\*, the gifted 28 year-old Trinbagonian (native of Trinidad and Tobago) multi-instrumentalist\*\* /arranger/composer Etienne Charles fuses stimulating jazz and calypso spices (among other “New World” flavors) throughout a repertoire mainly comprised of jazzified instrumental adaptations of calypso classics penned or popularized by the most renowned Calypsonians such as Mighty Sparrow, Roaring Lion and Lord Kitchener. Identified on his birth certificate as Aldwyn Roberts (1922-2000), Lord Kitchener was precisely the author of my favorite couple of tunes: Kitch’s *Bebop of Calypso* (Lord Kitchener’s homage to Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis) and the humorous number titled *My Landlady*, both of which are enriched with the contributions of a couple of legendary guests — lead vocalist/guitarist Lord Superior and Jamaican pianist Monty Alexander. Last but not least, it must be noted that four of the eleven tracks feature another distinguished guest artist of Caribbean ancestry — the influential Harlem-born percussionist Ralph McDonald. “My cultural history makes up a big part of who I am”, Charles says, “and as a result, it comes out in the music”. He is absolutely correct. —*Luis Tamargo*



\*Also composed of Brian Hogans (alto sax), Jacques Schwarz-Bart (tenor sax), Sullivan Fortner Jr. (piano), Ben Williams (double bass), and Obed Calvaire (drums).

\*\*Mainly known for his admirable talents as a trumpeter, Charles is also featured here on flugelhorn, cuatro, and percussion.

**JOSÉ CONDE**  
**José Conde**  
**(Pipiki Records)**

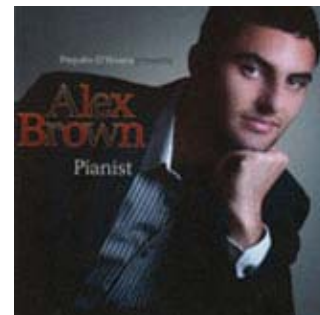
Hailing from Brooklyn, New York, the Cuban-born bandleader José Conde is back on the airwaves, after trading his Cuban tres guitar for a vintage Gretsch hole-body electric guitar, among other new techno-gadgets utilized in harmony with more natural instruments of acoustic character for the making of his eponymous sophomore release. Fusing traditional son and rumba rhythms with contemporary pop, soul, rock, and “world beat” elements, Conde brews fresh musical tea that keeps his global village listeners in a diasporic daze while forcing them to shake their booties.



The scores swing from Brooklyn to the Caribbean, from Rio to South Africa, and everywhere else in between. While Conde plays most of the guitars, bass, keyboards, and percussion in this recording, he is effectively assisted by a multi-cultural mix of New York's A-List players, featuring “world beat” drummer Gintas Janusonis, Brazilian percussionist Ze Mauricio, guitarist Rafael Gomez, and Cuban friends Román Díaz (congas), and Jorge Bringas (bass). Three bonus tracks are added to a repertoire of a dozen Spanish-language tracks, including a Portuguese version of the selection Mabel, an English-language version of the track Mujer (Woman), and the song Munghana Wamina (sang in the Tsonga language). Choice tracks include Amor y Felicidad, El Manantial (featuring guest Baye Kouyate on talking drum), and Matapalo Matamusa (featuring guest trombonist Big Sam Williams) —*Rudy Mangual*

**ALEX BROWN**  
**Pianist**  
**(Paquito Records)**

Like his mentor Chick Corea, Alex Brown likes to make music that creates a balance between the boundaries of jazz, Latin and classical music. The Berklee graduate of Cuban heritage brings us his first bandleading offering, showcasing his mastery of the ivory keys, as well- as his well elaborated compositions and arrangements. Through a handful of mostly original scores, Brown is full of surprises, as he constantly changes styles and directions, while having fun at making great music. He is fortunate to count on accompanists with unwavering commitment to perfection: Ben Williams (bass), Eric Doob (drums), Warren Wolf (marimba), Pedrito Martínez (percussion), and Paquito D’Rivera (alto sax).



The selections vary from funky scores to traditional jazz to Brazilian and Cuban/Caribbean rhythms to the flamenco-jazz interpretation of my favorite track, Bulería. —*Rudy Mangual*

## PRODUCT REVIEW

### Newport Capo



Commonly used to raise the pitch of a string instrument, a capo (short for capotasto, Italian for head of fretboard) is a device used on the neck of a typically fretted stringed instrument to shorten the length of the strings, hence raising the instrument's pitch. Typically used on guitars, mandolins and banjos, the capo allows a player to perform a piece in a certain key using different fingerings than they would use if played open (or without a capo). Capos come in numerous styles and sizes but all with the common rubber-covered bar that mechanically holds down the strings. Main factors in selecting a type of capo are ease in method of use, physical size of device, and its ability to hold down the strings uniformly without alternating the turning of the instrument.

The new Newport Capo from G7th (an U.K. Leicester, England based company) is the latest in the company's expanding range of G7th capos, designed to solve all previous problems from capos using a similar "over center locking mechanism". Nick Camping, G7th's designer and founder explains: "With the Newport we made a capo that's easier to place across the strings, and can be adjusted once on the instrument". What I like about it is that is lightweight, low profile, stylish in look and it works like a precision engineering tool. MRP \$39.95

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