

## NOVEMBER 2009 ISSUE

# Columns



### QUE PASA IN LA

By Rudy Mangual  
Photos ©2009 by Luis Avila



## Streaming Music

Somos Son  
Bilongo

[Windows Media](#)  
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The Estrada Brothers

Mr. Ray  
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Manny Silvera

Bassed in America  
[Windows Media](#)  
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**Bobby Matos**  
Cuchy Frito Man  
[Windows Media](#)  
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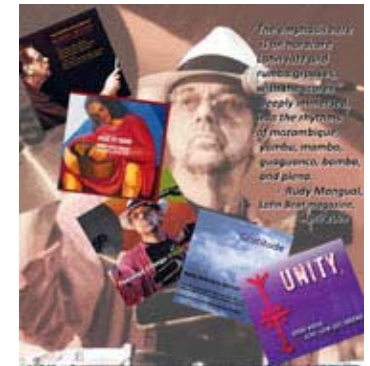
**Chembo Corniel**  
Buena Gente  
[Windows Media](#)  
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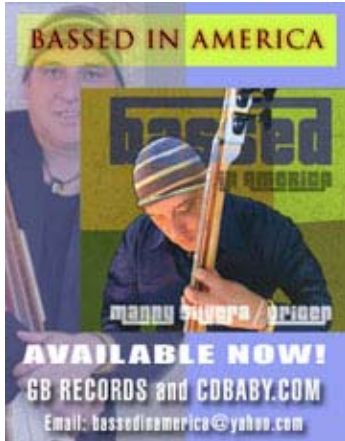
**Maña**  
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**Johnny Polanco y Su  
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On Sunday, October 11, 2009 a very special event billed as "**Friends of Costazul Toast to Ralph Garay, Jr.**" was conducted at the renowned El Floridita Restaurant, in Hollywood. A native of Spanish Harlem, Ralph Garay Jr. (alias "The Limo Man") has been a Los Angeles salsa scene regular for almost a half a century. As the owner of a limousine service company, Garay spent most of his professional life driving and becoming friends with the "best of the best" of the Latin music scene. His clients included the likes of Celia Cruz, Eddie Palmieri, Tito Nieves, José Alberto (El Canario), Cuban Pete, and his cousin Willie Bobo, among many others, while his best friends were Tito Puente and Ralph Mercado. Although he retired from the limousine business, Garay continues to support everything salsa in L.A.

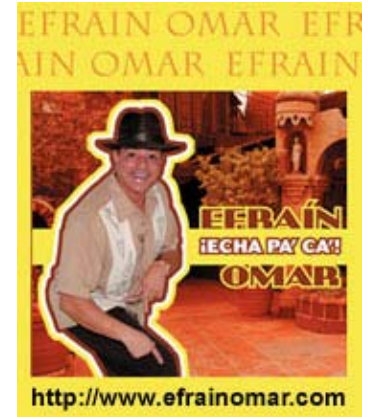
**Costazul** is one of Los Angeles' favorite salsa bands. It's led by the tag-team siblings Freddy and Johnny Crespo (like Garay, they are New Yorkers of Puerto Rican ancestry). Absent from the local music scene for about a year due to medical issues affecting both brothers, Costazul is now back stronger than ever and sounding pretty amazing with its trademark New York salsa style. The spokesman for the band, Johnny Crespo, told us that they had decided to honor Ralph Garay Jr. with this special event, accompanied by many of his closest friends. With the outstanding help of Debby Farley and Dalia Gómez, among others, this intimate gathering of good friends featuring good music and lots of funny anecdotes was a great success. Costazul played a powerful set of "salsa dura," with special guests such as Poncho Sánchez, Francisco Torres, George Ortiz, and Eddie Resto, to mention a few. We thank the entire staff of El Floridita Restaurant for its friendly service and for hosting the event.

**Around town:**

"**El Festival Del Cuatro 2009**" (The Annual Cuatro Festival 2009) is a celebration of Puerto Rican culture in California, centered around the national musical instrument of Puerto Rico known as the "Cuatro" (a nine-string guitar). This annual event is produced by Roberto Rivera, President of Festival del Cuatro Organization (a non-profit organization), dedicated to showcasing the main exponents of this amazing stringed instrument. Headlining this year's event are the incomparable performances of Yomi Matos, Alvin Medina y La Sonora Borinqueña, and "La Trovadora" Yezenia Cruz. The three-day event starts in the city of San Diego, California on Friday, November 13th at the San Marcos Community Center in San Marcos and hosted by the House of Puerto Rico San Diego. On Saturday, November 14th, the festival comes to Los Angeles at the Garrison Theater in Scripps College in the city of Claremont, California, hosted by the Festival del Cuatro Organization. Latin Beat Magazine will be there! Sunday, November 15th, the festival takes place at the Club Puertorriqueño de San Francisco in the Mission Area of the city of San Francisco. For tickets and more details, visit:

- [www.houseofpuertorico.com](http://www.houseofpuertorico.com) (San Diego),
- [www.festivaldelcuatro.org](http://www.festivaldelcuatro.org) (Los Angeles), and
- [www.clubpuertorriquenosf.com](http://www.clubpuertorriquenosf.com) (San Francisco).

Directly from Perú, **Mandinga- Afro Peruvian Ensemble** (featuring Braulio Barrera) will be performing on Wednesday, November 4th, at Mama Juana's in Studio City. The Quiet Cannon, in the city of Montebello, will be presenting salsa singers **Maelo Ruiz** and **Santiago Cerón** on Thursday, November 5th, for a salsa double-hitter event.



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Salsa Fridays at the Long Beach Dance Center will feature live music by **Orquesta La Fiebre** on November 6th. The Folkloric Society of Panamá presents (directly from Puerto Rico) singers **Johnny Rivera** and **Giro** in a special event to be held at the Hollywood Park Casino, in the city of Inglewood, on November 7th. **Yari Moré y su Orquesta** will be performing and backing up the abovementioned vocalists.

The all-female band **Ellas Son** performs at El Pescador Restaurant, in the city of Carson on Thursday nights. **Saturday Salsa Nights** are featured at the Lido Night Club in the city of Manhattan Beach. For more information, call 323-833-1592.

Venezuelan salsa superstar **Oscar D'León** and legendary Colombian singer **Joe Arroyo** headline a salsa dance party at the Radisson Hotel/LAX on Saturday, November 14th. For tickets and more information, call 818-770-1755.

**Divas of Latin Music** features singers **Ana Barbara**, **Ivy Queen** and **India** in a benefit concert for the City of Los Angeles, on Sunday, November 15th, at the Greek Theater in Los Angeles. Salsa legend **Larry Harlow** will be performing at CSLA's Luckman Theater in on Saturday, November 21st. The event features the first live performance of Larry Harlow's *Salsa Suite*, with the backing of the CSLA Afro-Latin Ensemble under the direction of Paul De Castro.

"El Principe de la Bachata", **Frank Reyes**, will be performing on Wednesday, November 25th, at the Radisson Hotel/LAX. For tickets and more information, call 818-770-1755.

**Bobby Matos & his Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble** will be performing at the Commonwealth Lounge, in the city of Fullerton (Orange County) on Sunday, November 29th. For more information, call 714-525-8888. Continue supporting your local artists and their venues. Peace.



## A BITE FROM THE APPLE

By Vicki Sola

Image of Willie Martinez Familia ©2009 by Kathy Nicolosi



Percussionist **Willie Martínez** has been an integral part of New York's musical scene for over two decades. Martínez is not only a sought-after drummer, but he also composes, arranges, and sing. (This guy can belt out one mean bolero!) The versatile Martínez has lent his percussive and vocal talents to gothic funk bands at



BGGB's, as well as to Afro-Cuban jazz groups at Carnegie Hall. Throughout his career, he has worked with Chico O'Farrill, Bebo Valdés, Ray Santos, Dave Valentín, Hilton Ruíz, Steve Turré, Danny Mixon, Benny Powell, Arthur Blythe, Leon Pendarvis,

Barry Eastmond, Jerry Barnes, Ira Siegel, George Cables, Jewel and Faith Hill. These days, he can be seen and heard all over town, along with his own La Familia Sextet, playing original compositions and arrangements. His sidemen are Renato Thoms and Cristián Rivera (percussion), Misha Tsiganov (piano), Jennifer Vincent (bass), Max Schweiger (baritone saxophone/flute), and J. Walter Hawkes (trombone). "The baritone sax and trombone front-line," says Martínez, "is a unique treatment for this genre, and combined with the infectious rhythm section, smokes it to the very last note." Martínez considers himself blessed to have some of the music scene's most accomplished professionals-and some of his dearest friends-as members of his band. "When I first started La Familia Sextet in late 2004," says Martínez, "I aimed to create an ensemble that embodied the spirit and soul of New York City's great tradition of Latin jazz-paying homage to the greats such as Tito Puente, Cal Tjader, and Mongo Santamaría, as well as more contemporary ensembles like Jerry González's Fort Apache." Martínez rejoices in the fact that he has succeeded by surrounding himself with musicians whose musical passion and dedication match his own. He says that his group "represents a lifelong dream come true, with members hailing from various different countries, coming together to present the best in New York City-style Latin jazz. From Brooklyn (New York) to St. Petersburg (Russia) to Weiz (Austria) to Colón (Panamá) to Pascagoula (Mississippi) to Salem (Oregon), we all share the same passions: Latin music and jazz!" The latest production of Willie Martínez's La Familia Sextet is *After Winter, Spring*. The group has been performing for five years at the Nuyorican Poet's Café, on the last Thursday of every month. More information is available at <http://www.williemartinez.com/>.

**DJ Jeff's "Hot Pick of the Month":** *Canción de Amor* by Maña.

Percussionist *Angel Rodríguez*, well known in the Big Apple for his long association with the Bronx's The Point Community Development Corporation (CDC), with whom he has been providing cultural enrichment for so many over the years, and for his work with groups like Demetrios Kastaris's The Latin Jazz Coalition, is working on a new project. "*La Timba de Ayer*," says Rodríguez, "is an effort to bring back the music of drums and chants that existed in the streets and parks of New York City for the last forty years." According to Rodríguez, places like Central Park, Claremont Park, Crotona Park, Prospect Park, and 182nd St. and Amsterdam Avenue (the home of "Armando's Rumbas"), served as schools for him and many other musicians. "With this in mind," states the percussionist, "writing original songs for this project became very important to me. It gave me an opportunity to express events of my life through music, and these rumba jams which still go on today." Rodríguez attempts to write his songs in such a way that everyone can identify with the messages that he puts forth. His personnel

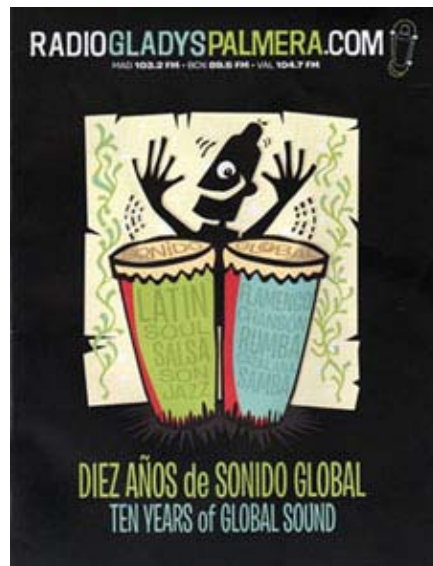
includes the likes of percussionist/vocalists Albert "Baba Femi" Humphrey, William Everich, Frank Almonte, and José "Mongo" Rivera. Stay tuned... we'll keep you updated on *La Timba de Ayer*.

**Around town...** Queens Borough President Helen M. Marshall declared October 4th, 2009 as **Hirám Remón** Day. That afternoon, trombonist/conch shell player Demetrios Kastaris and his Latin-Jazz Coalition paid homage to Remón, their lead singer, at the Stathakion Cultural Center in Queens, N.Y. The seventy-seven year-old vocalist, according to Kastaris, has also recorded and/or performed with Mongo Santamaría, Charles Mingus, Yomo Toro, Bobby Sanabria, Jorge Dalto and Mauricio Smith, throughout the course of his illustrious six-decade career. "During the tribute concert," says Kastaris, "the Latin-Jazz Coalition played some extremely upbeat, lively, and tasty Afro-Cuban jazz and salsa. Their fourth number was a masterful rendition of the lovely bolero *Tres Palabras*." The members of Kastaris' group performing at the event included Wesley Reynoso (piano), Chico Álvarez (vocals), Ray Martínez (bass), Ángel Rodríguez (bongó/vocal chorus), Samuel Torres (congas), Willie Martínez (drums), Noah Bless (trombone), Conie Grossman (flute), Alí Bello (violin), the 13-year old bouzouki sensation Theofilos Katechis, and Remón himself. The event ended with Remón thanking all those present for honoring him in such spectacular fashion. Kastaris adds that Remón "did not pass up the opportunity to tell everyone that he is not retiring any time soon!" ¡Hasta la próxima!



## LATIN UPDATE

By Nelson Rodriguez



As we come to the end of the year, we can easily conclude that recordings are still alive but not doing well, in terms of sales... We need to look into 2010 with fresh new ideas. Sales of singles for \$0.99 have failed, and the need to sell a full project with artwork, liner notes and extra outtakes (for re-issues), etc., is even more important.

In terms of the recordings issued in 2009, it must be noted that releases by pianists (primarily in Latin jazz) have been prominent. **Arturo O'Farrill's** *Risa Negra* opens with *One Adam 12 Mambo*, written for his youngest son Adam, who plays trumpet on this CD and is joined by Arturo's wife, Alison Deane (on piano) and son Zachary (on drums); it's a family affair! The main sextet is formed by Vince Cherico, Jim Seeley (trumpeter with whom Arturo has worked with in the past for Zoho Music), David Bixler (on a mean alto saxophone), Boris Kozlov and Rolando Guerrero. Look for *Crazy Chicken*, *No Way Off*, *Goat*

*Check, Blue State Blues* and *One Adam 12 Mambo* to do well at radio!

The internationally acclaimed Afro-Caribbean band **Fra Fra Sound** just released its 10th CD, a unique style of jazzy world music titled *Dya So*. This Dutch septet has been together for 25 years entertaining fans around the world with its mixture of Caribbean, Pan-African, and Latin music.

**Kristina** (Kristina Smith) is an incredible new vocalist on the scene, who shines on her CD *Offshore Echoes*, which covers blues, Caribbean, jazz, Latin and Brazilian music. Accompanying Kristina is a "who's who" of S.F. Bay area musicians, such as John Santos, Murray Low, David Belove, Frank Martin, Mary Fettig and Paul van Wageningen.

Bassist **Manny Silvera** has been a Los Angeles staple for many years and remains an intricate part of the Johnny Polanco band, but with his new CD, *Bassed in America*, he makes a strong statement as a jazz musician as well as a salsaero.

Many salsa fans will be blown away by the new **Sonora Matancera** CD *85 Años de La Sonora Matancera* that Javier Vázquez has put together with the band's current line-up of musicians and a new vocalist that add to the immense historical list of singers that the institution has had...Dario Rosado. The young man does a wonderful job, and the CD, with all the tracks composed by Vazquez, swings with a new modern sound that will generate huge radio play worldwide!

**Charlie Sierra**, one of Puerto Rico's top timbaleros, has had an extensive career, playing for many great bands as well as being one of the island's most sought-after studio musicians. His bandleading debut, *Ganas de Bailar*, features his own group, Paso Nivel. It's a hot new release that will have everyone dancing as it offers a musical variety that fans will love. The bolero *Medley Romantico* features guest vocalists Andy Montañez, Cheo Feliciano and Ismael Miranda, along with band member Tito Pérez.

**Andy Padua's** "Hard Salsa Radio" ([HardSalsa.com](http://HardSalsa.com)) on the Internet has to be the best mix of new and old in 2009 (even though the DJ mixes need to improve), giving salsa artists much needed exposure. It's amazing how many tracks played on the show I have not heard in 20 years or more and they are in my collection!

**Kat Parra** was a huge hit a few years ago with her previous CD, and her new release, titled *Dos Amantes*, is a superb look into her Sephardic Jewish heritage. Her new ensemble, the Sephardic Music Experience, is joined by guest artists such as Jason McGuire (on guitar) and Ravi Gutala (on tabla). The arrangements are handled by Wayne Wallace (her former producer), Oscar Stagnaro, Murray Low and David Pinto.

Congratulations go out to radio DJ **Gladys Palmera** (from Spain's [RadioGladys Palmera.com](http://RadioGladysPalmera.com)) who is celebrating her 10th anniversary as broadcaster of global sounds (MAD 103.2FM/BCN 89.5FM/VAL 104.7FM).



## DESDE BORINQUEN

Por Elmer Gonzalez

Fotos ©2009 por Edna Aponte Zayas



Desde hace varios meses, Puerto Rico experimenta los embates de la crisis económica que también ha impactando a muchos otros países. En septiembre, el gobernador Luis Fortuño anunció el despido de más de 20 mil empleados públicos como una medida para afrontar el déficit presupuestario de su gobierno. Sin embargo, tal parece que la susodicha crisis no ha afectado notablemente la presentación de espectáculos de diferentes géneros musicales y el apoyo del público, manifestado con su asistencia a tales eventos. En octubre se realizó el concierto titulado "La Noche de Estrellas" de la radioemisora Fidelity. Este concierto congregó, en la noche del día 23 de octubre, a diversas estrellas del pop latino, tales como Ricardo Montaner, Paulina Rubio, Kany, y Olga Tañón, entre otros, y propició el reencuentro de los



ex-Menudos. Por otro lado, el cantautor español José Luis Perales se presentó ante un público entusiasmado durante el día 25 de octubre en el Centro de Bellas Artes de Santurce. En el terreno de los ritmos populares afroantillanos, se llevó a cabo la reunión de varios de los miembros originales de Batacumbé en la Cancha Guillermo Angulo del pueblo de Carolina. Este fue un evento que revivió buenos tiempos de dicho grupo, fundado allá por el 1981. Ahí figuraron Cachete Maldonado, Eddie "Guagua" Rivera, Eric Figueroa, Papo Vázquez, Pablito Rosario, Endel Dueño, Héctor Veneros, Piro Rodríguez, Ricardo Pons, Chegüi Ramos y Jerry Medina. Unas semanas antes, al principio del mes de octubre, se presentó otro baile, en el municipio de Canóvanas, que reunió en la misma tarima a Larry Harlow con Ismael Miranda.

**TITO NIEVES EN CONCIERTO.** Luego de tres décadas de trayectoria profesional como cantante salsero, el puertorriqueño Tito Nieves se presentó por primera vez en la sala del Centro de Bellas Artes mediante un par de conciertos realizados en la noche del 24 de octubre. Nieves aprovechó la ocasión para repasar su carrera musical y reafirmar especialmente su popularidad entre las mujeres boricuas de mediana edad. Entre los temas más aplaudidos y simultáneamente cantados por el público estuvieron Tu cárcel, No me vuelvo a enamorar, De mí enamórate y Lo que son las cosas. Nieves recordó sus años en La Gran Manzana con el tema New York, New York, en el cual se integró al cuerpo de bailarines dirigidos por el coreógrafo Tito Ortos. Un popurrí compuesto por El pregonero, El piragüero y El panadero trajo a la memoria sus años con el Conjunto Clásico. Fue un total de 20 temas que el público recibió con cariño y entusiasmo. El cantante, nacido en Río Piedras el día 4 de junio de 1959, consideró que fue un "privilegio" el poder presentarse en la sala de conciertos más prestigiosa de la Isla. Aunque fue diagnosticado con cáncer en la garganta en 1984, el vocalista se escuchó afinado, confiado y en clave.

**LA BOMBA AL RECORD GUINNESS.** El domingo 11 de octubre, la folclorista Norma Salazar logró reunir a varios grupos especializados en los bailes y los ritmos de bomba en la Plaza de Recreo del Municipio de Juncos, localizado al sureste de San Juan, con el propósito de establecer un record Guinness referente a barrileros de bomba tocando simultáneamente en un mismo lugar. Luciendo sus vistosos trajes típicos, se inscribieron para participar en dicho evento 240 artistas, entre bailadores y tocadores de bomba. Todos formaban parte de diferentes grupos provenientes de Juncos, Carolina, Guayama, Santurce, Loíza y Mayagüez. Después de la presentación de cada grupo, el coordinador musical Ángel Alomar ubicó alrededor de la plaza a 150 ejecutantes de barriles (tambores de bomba), quienes interpretaron simultáneamente diversas variantes de la bomba, tales como el cuembé y el holandés, con miras a desarrollar un concierto emotivo y representativo de la historia del ritmo más africano que encontramos entre las expresiones folklóricas de Puerto Rico. Esta actividad fue auspiciada por el Departamento de Cultura y Turismo del Municipio de Juncos y por su alcalde, Alfredo Alejandro Carrión. [gonzalezlmer@yahoo.com](mailto:gonzalezlmer@yahoo.com).



**DESDE LA BAHIA**

By Jesse "Chuy" Varela  
Images ©2009



Latin Rhythm Boys

**REDWOOD CITY SALSA FESTIVAL:** On Saturday, September 26th, the quaint peninsular town of Redwood City nestled between San Francisco and San José came alive with the sounds and flavors of salsa. Redwood City's Second Annual Salsa Festival attracted thousands of people to its historic downtown district. The musical lineup was comprised of salsa, Latin jazz, and "Latin alternative" sounds, and even complimented a culinary salsa-making competition sponsored by the city. The temperature reached a muggy 92° F, but the music and the food made it feel like the weather of a Caribbean paradise. The bands were high-caliber acts that delivered no-nonsense "salsa dura". **Salsero** and **Orquesta Saboricua** opened the Salsa Stage with boricua (Puerto Rican) classics that quickly ignited the dance area.

**The Latin Jazz Youth Ensemble of San Francisco** has some new faces and it is great to see how the ensemble evolves and continues to turn out gifted young musicians. Dr. John Calloway is the musical director, backed by Arturo and Sylvia Ariera, the mom-and-pop founding team that administers the group. Equally as impressive was the **San José Jazz Latin Youth Ensemble**, which closed out the Family Stage.

**Lo Cura** and **Cuban Cowboys** played great Latin alternative rock with originality and flair, but it was the **Latin Rhythm Boys** who stole the show. The Hayward-based group got extra time due to a change of schedule to accommodate Orquesta Borinquen, which played bomba and jíbaro classics with cuatro guitars and roaring trombones that rampaged with driving energy.

Orquesta Borinquen's trajectory goes back to 1963 when it was organized by cuatrista Junior Miranda (and originally known as Junior Miranda's Latin Rhythm Boys). Nowadays, his sons, Henry and Earl, maintain the family's musical tradition, with the help of great musicians (like lead cuatrista Johnny Rodríguez) and the Mon Rivera-style trombones, which keep the people dancing and happy! Orquesta Borinquen recently opened for La Sonora Ponceña in SF and got Roccapulco fired up! They have a Myspace page and several Youtube videos. One of the unique traits of the band is their ability to create Puerto Rican-style adaptations of Cuban classics like Guantanamera and El Cuarto de Tula. What they do is "urbanized jíbaro music" that is comparable to what is coming out of P.R., such as Claudio Prodigio, Aventura Jíbara and others. Every time I've seen them, they've turned out the house!

**CÉSAR RIDES AGAIN!** New salsa venue! After turning over the keys to his longtime César's Latin Palace in San Francisco many years ago, promoter/pianist/bandleader César Ascarrunz is at it again. This time he will be opening a new salsa venue in downtown Oakland. The chosen spot is the historic Sweet's Ballroom that was called Sand's Ballroom in the 1960s and presented great artists like Tito Puente, Tito Rodríguez and many other icons of salsa, Latin pop and Mexican music. The Sand's was run by María and Chico Ochoa. Chico led an outstanding band that included Pete Escovedo (on vocals) and his late brother Coke (on timbal).

The opening night of this new venue (located at 1933 Broadway in downtown Oakland) is scheduled for Friday October 16th, and will feature César's All-Stars, with special guests Francisco Aguabella, Armando Peraza, Roger Glenn, Gibby Ross, Ana Daisy and others. From there on, César will present salsa dancing every Friday and Saturday. For additional information,

call 415-821-1156.

¡**VIVA ORESTES!** Congrats to Bay Area legend Orestes Vilató for his Latin Grammy nomination in the field of "Best Traditional Tropical Album"! His CD "It's About Time" was produced by Rebeca Mauleón and features a wonderful cast of Los Angeles-based Cuban musicians. The tunes represent a superb showcase for the technical wizardry of Orestes, who is clean, precise and musically hip with his percussive beats. The résumé he has built is quite stellar, and we are truly blessed to have him in our midst. John Santos will be honoring Orestes Vilató at Yoshi's Oakland on Sunday, November 1st, with a party designated as "A rhythmic celebration of Orestes Vilató's 50 years on Latin music's cutting edge" ( in conjunction with John Santos' birthday), featuring the John Santos Sextet with the masterful special guest Orestes Vilató. You don't want to miss this! Yoshis.com for more information. ¡Hasta la próxima!  
[chuyvarela@aol.com](mailto:chuyvarela@aol.com)



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