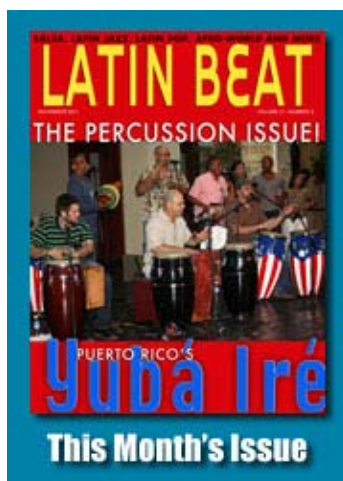


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Reviews

NOVEMBER 2011 ISSUE

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PICK OF THE MONTH

**PONCHO SANCHEZ AND TERENCE BLANCHARD
= CHANO Y DIZZY!
(Concord Picante)**

Conguero Poncho Sanchez pays tribute to two of the sacred pioneers of Latin jazz — conga player/composer Chano Pozo, and jazz giant trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie — on his 25th recording as a leader for Concord Picante. For the first trumpet chair, Sanchez called on his fellow label mate Terence Blanchard. This multi-Grammy recipient is one of the most innovative and influential jazz musicians and film score composers of his generation. Through 11 tracks, Sanchez and Blanchard embody the essence and magic that Chano Pozo and Dizzy Gillespie brought to Cubop, Afro-Cuban jazz, and finally, Latin jazz. The tribute opens with the track “Chano Pozo Medley” (touching on three of Pozo’s legendary compositions “Tin Tin Deo”, “Manteca” and Guachi Guaro”). The follow-up track finds Blanchard blowing in ecstasy to Dizzy’s composition “Con Alma”, followed by more playful improvisations on his own score, “Wandering Wonder”. Sanchez’s posse of jazzistas bring to the table intriguing scores, including “Dizzy’s Dashiki” (by pianist David Torres), “Harri’s Walk” (by trumpeter Ron Blake), and the selections “Promenade” and “Jack’s Dilemma” (by trombonist Francisco Torres). Dizzy’s composition “Groovin’ High” (originally a swing tune) becomes a sexy mambo/jazz. The Latin jazz party comes to an end with Pozo’s spirited hardcore salsa tune “Ariñañara”, leaving you with the feeling of wanting more. Both Sanchez and Blanchard deliver amazing performances. As for Sanchez’s band, they always rock. Long live Latin jazz! —*Rudy Mangual*



Cintron Band Live
Human Nature
Windows Media Quicktime

Vanelis
Como Lo Extraño
Windows Media Quicktime

Nayibe
Borinquen

Windows Media Quicktime

Luis González
Spain
Windows Media
Quicktime

Rolando Sanchez
Vamonos De Fiesta
Windows Media
Quicktime

Steve Pouchie
Watch Ur Wallet
Windows Media
Quicktime

Somos Son
Bilongo
Windows Media
Quicktime

The Estrada Brothers
Mr. Ray
Windows Media
Quicktime

Manny Silvera
Bassed in America
Windows Media
Quicktime

Bobby Matos
Cuchy Frito Man
Windows Media
Quicktime

REVIEWS

CARLOS "GOGO" GOMEZ New Paradigm Global Music (Kidlat Records)

On "New Paradigm Global Music", Tri-State-based, world-renowned percussionist Carlos "GoGo" Gomez takes us on an exploratory musical journey into a world of trance induction through rhythms.

The veteran master drummer/martial artist/Yoruba priest and Oba-Anyan (keeper of the sacred drum knowledge) fuses acoustic Latin and world percussions with electronica loops and sequences, creating a mystical funky and spiritual soundtrack for a new global generation. With Gomez laying down all the rhythmic beats and percussive acrobats (which are many), David Ambrosio anchors all the scores on the bass while Lou Perez's guitar brings a melodic flavor to the mix. Keyboardist Eric Kupper joins the power trio on

three of the selections, adding another dimension and more musical layers to this abundant galaxy of sounds, grooves and beats. Gomez's quest into the realm of shamanic dance (or trance dance) is indeed a success. His hypnotic syncopated global beats, cosmic mantras, and spiritual ambiance in motion are an incubator for inner exploration and the full manifestation of joy. Musically, Gomez's percussion work is outstanding and exquisite. A stunning timbal solo stands out in the selection "Zen Dance", as well as his use of Middle Eastern drums, rain-sticks, and Brazilian percussions throughout this recording. Other favorites include "Sanctuary of the Pink Diamond", and "Aremu Odudua". —*Rudy Mangual*



RUMBANKETE Que No Pare La Fiesta

Organized seven years ago in the city of Los Angeles by the young but visionary Californian-Nicaraguan trombonist/arranger Dennis Girón (who had already paid his dues with Costa Azul, Son Mayor, etc.), the extraordinary timba-salsa band Rumbankete has experienced multiple personnel changes since its foundation —besides Jirón, the only remaining founding member is the indispensable Amerindian-Filipino pianist/keyboardist/composer /arranger Matthew "Mateo" Amper.

Rumbankete is currently comprised of nine musicians and a couple of formidable Cuban vocalists ―the Havanese timbero Gonzalo "Chalo" Chomat and his conjugal partner, the Sancti Spiritus-born diva Iris Sandra Cepeda (of Arte Mixto fame). It's debut CD equally highlights the band's fierce 3-trombone lineup (in conjunction with Dayrén Santamaría's swinging violin) and its perfectly compatible



Chembo Corniel
Buena Gente
Windows Media
Quicktime

Maña
Tranquilito
Windows Media
Quicktime

Johnny Polanco y Su
Conjunto Amistad
El Gusto de Mi Salsa
Windows Media
Quicktime

rhythm section, often anchored on the notable interaction between the seasoned Nuyorican timbalero/bongocero Joey de León and his usual Colombian accomplice, the versatile timbador/güirero/producer Alberto López

Consisting mostly of original compositions (the only exception is a questionable version of the venerable Cuban standard “Bilongo”), Rumbankete’s first offering demonstrates that Jirón’s organization can deliver powerful timba, but it is also capable of playing slower and softer sounds designed to appeal to the L.A. Latin dancers. This stylistic strategy can be appreciated, for example, on the evolving arrangements of Cepeda’s “Quiero Imaginar,” a “salsa erótica” number that eventually turns into a timba-style jam. Cepeda also exhibits her admirable vocal and compositional skills on a salsified version of “Dos Palabras,”* the title track of her eponymous 2011 solo debut on the Spanish Music Records label.

Last but not least, Rumbankete’s debut serves as evidence of the surprising maturity displayed, in his dual function as singer/songwriter, by Gonzalo Chomat. This is particularly demonstrated on the trova-timba convergence of Chomat’s “Nos Vamos Quedando Solos,” a gorgeous track enhanced by the heart-felt solo of Peruvian guitarist Ramón Stagnaro, whose last name is misspelled twice on the album credits. Considering its credentials and qualifications, I’m certain that Rumbankete is bound to share the stage with many visiting timba bands from Cuba in the near future. —*Luis Tamargo*

*No to be confused with the classic Cuban bolero “Tres Palabras”, penned by Osvaldo Farrés in 1942.

THE CRAIG RUSSO LATIN JAZZ PROJECT

Mambo Influenciado (Craig Russo)

Chicago-based drummer/percussionist/bandleader Craig Russo continues his love and passion for Latin jazz rhythms on this third production as a leader. In the company of his Latin Jazz Project with Chip McNeill (tenor saxophone), Jeff Helgesen (trumpet), John “Chips” Stephens and Joan Hickey (piano), Josh Walden (bass), and Jeff Magby (drums, alternating with Russo when playing conga drums and percussion) Russo presents a repertoire of 13 scores. A handful of originals, plus jazz standards, including compositions by Cedar Walton such as the opener “Ugetsu”, Bobby Hutcherson’s “Highway One”, and the Victor Feldman, Miles Davis classic “Seven Steps to Heaven”, are revisited here interpreted as Latin jazz arrangements. Guest vocalist Nancy Kelly is featured on the selections “The Island” (a sensual 6/8 percussion based Abakuá rhythm), and “Invitation” (a medium tempo guaguancó with a taste of straight-ahead swing). Also worth noting are two original scores by pianist Chip McNeill “Power of Mind” and Chip’s Last Word”, as well as Russo’s percussion-only rumba “La Rumba de Pogo”. —*Rudy Mangual*



PABLO ASLÁN QUINTET Piazzolla In Brooklyn (SOUNDBRUSH)

En 1959, el magistral bandoneonista Astor Piazzolla residía en la isla de Manhattan, donde organizó un quinteto ad-hoc de “studio musicians” (cuyo inusual formato incluía guitarra eléctrica, vibrafón, piano, bajo y ciertos instrumentos cubanos categorizados en aquel entonces como “minor percussion”*) y grabó el LP “Take Me Dancing”, con miras a penetrar el mercado estadounidense con lo que Piazzolla se atrevió a definir como “un nuevo ritmo llamado J.T. (Jazz Tango)”. A pesar de las altas expectativas de Piazzolla, “Take Me Dancing” resultó ser un fracaso comercial categorizado eventualmente por su mismísimo creador como un abominable “pecado” artístico. ¿Quién le hubiera dicho a Piazzolla que su más ambicioso proyecto sería rehabilitado después de más de medio siglo? Esto es precisamente lo que logra hacer el polifacético bajista argentino Pablo Aslán (radicado actualmente en Brooklyn) en el CD “Piazzolla en Brooklyn,” grabado en Buenos Aires con el acompañamiento de cuatro compatibles músicos porteños capaces de expresar, con la misma fluidez, el ritmo auténtico del tango y el vocabulario melódico del jazz**. Aslán y sus cómplices no sólo resaltan las posibilidades conceptuales de la pretérita grabación malograda de Piazzolla (neutralizadas en aquel entonces por la incompatible monotonía percusiva y la prevalente carencia de improvisación jazzística), sino que también propician el florecimiento de las contribuciones espontáneas de cada uno de los participantes, sin tener que rearmonizar los fundamentales arreglos originales de Piazzolla. Todo lo cual justifica el subtítulo del nuevo CD de Aslán: “And the Rebirth of Jazz Tango”. —*Luis Tamargo*



*Entre los percusionistas de estudio contratados para tocar bongó y güiro en el susodicho álbum se encontraba el dominicano Johnny Pacheco, quien aún no había establecido su afortunada alianza con Jerry Masucci como cofundador del sello Fania.

**Me refiero a Gustavo Bergalli (trompeta), Nicolás Enrich (bandoneón), Abel Rogantini (piano) y Daniel “Pipi” Piazzolla (batería), el último de los cuales es nieto del controversial pionero del “nuevo tango.”

YUBÁ IRÉ ¡Ya Está! ¡Se Formó! (Yubá Iré)

This sophomore recording by the Carolina, Puerto Rico-based rumba group Yubá Iré is their most innovative work to date. Led by master percussionist Hector Calderon, this percussion and dance troupe ensemble are practitioners of the traditions of the Afro-Cuban rumba and Afro Puerto Rico rhythms, as well as all the



traditional Afro-Caribbean rhythms known. Featuring some of the island's top-notch folkloric percussionists, including Felipe del Valle, Diego Centeno, Víctor Emmanuelli, Edgardo Hernandez, Eric Marrero, and Alberto Gallardo, Yubá Iré delivers a colorful Afro-Caribbean percussive experience that rivals rumba players anywhere on the planet. Their "live" performances are hypnotic as well as explosive, making them festival and concert venue favorites. Invited guest percussionists in this recording include Paoli Mejias, Enoch Carmona, Javier Oquendo, and Dave Marrero, among others. Favorites include the guaguancó "Se Formó el Rumbón", the yambú "Pan de Piquito", and the batá "Chango Araba". —*Rudy Mangual*



BILL O'CONNELL **Triple Play Plus Three** **(Zoho)**

Pianist extraordinaire Bill O'Connell brings us his latest endeavor, "Triple Play Plus Three", an experimental concept that revisits his previous "Triple Play" production (circa 2008), which first featured his unconventional spin on the traditional jazz trio format. O'Connell placed virtuoso conguero Richie Flores in the role usually played by a trap drummer, and used no bass player. The third voice of the trio was flutist Dave Valentin. This time around, O'Connell again called on Flores for conga drums, left out the bass player, and decided to rotate the third chair of the trio with guest players including woodwind master Paquito D'Rivera, mallet master Dave Samuels, and old friend flutist Dave Valentin. Wow! This recording is that special unplugged-jam session we all dream of being a part of, consisting of luminary players from the world of Latin jazz. The session opens with the O'Connell composition "Sweet Sophie Rose" featuring D'Rivera on the clarinet and Flores on the conga, as explosive as ever. The rotation continues with Dave Samuels stepping in on the vibes on the selection "Bill's Blues", while Dave Valentin follows on a tasty samba titled "Crazy Samba". After 10 tracks and dozens of spontaneous solos, my favorites include the selections "Round Midnight", "Non-Sense", and "La Playa". —*Rudy Mangual*



PRODUCT REVIEW

WOWee One Slim
Portable Speaker
From Gel Audio

Designed in Scotland, manufactured in China and distributed worldwide by A.S.L., the new WOWee One is a portable power-bass speaker that turns surfaces into sound-emitting devices. About the size of a smart phone and under a pound in weight, this amplified acoustic speaker will enhance the sound of any device with an audio jack (iPod, cell phone, tablet, laptop, etc.). We tested the WOWee One Slim white model on several cell phones and laptops, and were extremely impressed with the sounds produced by this very small speaker. Powered by a built-in rechargeable battery, with up to 10 hours of playtime per charge (recharged via computer USB or 5V USB power adapter, USB cable included but not 5V power adapter), the speaker connects to its audio input via a 3.5mm audio cable (included). After connecting to your audio source, place the WOWee One speaker to a flat surface, such as a table or desk top, wall or window (using mounting accessories, not included), or even a truck bed or car dash board and enjoy deep rich bass and dramatically enhanced volume and audio quality. Available on Amazon.com, the WOWee One Classic retails for \$59.99 and the Slim model retails for \$79.99. —*Rudy Mangual*



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