



DECEMBER 2009 ISSUE

Features ⊕⊕⊕

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the home of Latin Beat Magazine Digital! After publishing Latin Beat Magazine for 19 years in both print and online, Yvette and I have decided to continue pursuing our passion for Latin music with a digital version only. Latin Beat Magazine will continue its coverage of Latin music through monthly in-depth articles, informative columns, concert and CD reviews, and extensive news and information for everyone. Access to www.lbmo.com or www.latinbeatmagazine.com (Latin Beat Magazine Online) is free for a limited time only.

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This issue of Latin Beat Magazine Volume 19, Number 10, December/January 2010, concludes our coverage of 2009 and our 19th year of publishing, documenting, informing and sharing some of the best from the world of Latin music. The national instrument of Puerto Rico, the cuatro, is our main feature in conjunction with a review of this year's annual "Festival del Cuatro" (Cuatro Festival), celebrated in California during the month of November 2009. In addition, the staff's Top 10 CDs of the year – a Latin Beat Magazine annual tradition – is listed for your perusal. And as always, lots of music and entertainment news, reviews, hit parades and music information for your enjoyment. – *Rudy Mangual*



2009 TOP TEN CDS

By Vicki Solá

1. Dave Santiago & Latin Affair/Rumbeando En El Solar/Dave Santiago & Latin Affair
2. Jimmy Bosch/A Millón/JRGR Records
3. Annette A. Aguilar/The Day Waits For Nobody/Eagle Seeks Salmon Productions
4. Bobby Sanabria & TMSMO/Kenya Revisited Live/Jazzheads
5. Conjunto Imagen/Afinando/Muziq Records
6. La Excelencia/Mi Tumbao Social/Handle with Care Productions
7. Chembo Corniel/Things I Wanted to Do/Chemboro Records
8. Pablo Mayor & Folklore Urbano/Corazón/Chonta Records
9. Choco Orta/Ahora Mismo/Caminalo Records
10. Maña/Estamos Gozando, Vol. 2/Cookita Productions

By Luis Tamargo

1. The Cuban Masters Ensemble/Del Pasado al Presente/Obaniké
2. Mark Levine & the Latin Tinge/Off & On/Left Coast Clave
3. Paquito D'Rivera & WDR Big Band/Improvise-One/Connector
4. Orestes Vilató/It's About Time/Rafca
5. Paquito Hechavarría/Frankly/Calle 54
6. Bebo & Chucho Valdés/Juntos Para Siempre/Calle 54
7. Anacaona/The Buenavista Sisters' Social Club/Pa'ti Pa'mi
8. Various Artists/Samba Meets Boogie Woogie/Adventure Music
9. Andy Narell & Relator/University of Calypso/Heads-Up
10. Perico Hernández/Cuento en Clave/Guarapo

By Rudy Mangual

1. Mario Ortiz All Stars Band/Tributo 45 Aniversario/Zamora Music
2. José Lugo Orchestra/Guasabara/Norte
3. La Excelencia/Mi Tumbao Social/Handle With Care Productions
4. Rubén Blades/Cantares del Subdesarrollo/Rubén Blades Productions
5. Miguel Zenón/Esta Plena/Marsalis Music
6. Latin Giants of Jazz/Ven Baila Conmigo/Gigante
7. Chembo Corniel/Things I Wanted to Do/Chemboro Records

Streaming Music

Somos Son

Bilongo

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[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](#)

Chembo Corniel

Buena Gente

[Windows Media](#)

[Quicktime](#)

Maña

Tranquilito

[Windows Media](#)

[Quicktime](#)

Santiago Ceron

Besos de Hada

[Windows Media](#)

[Quicktime](#)

Johnny Polanco y Su

Conjunto Amistad

El Gusto de Mi Salsa

[Windows Media](#)

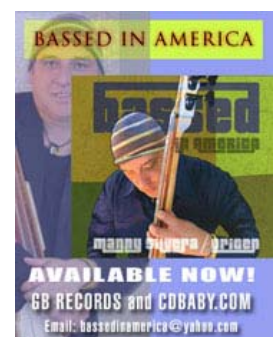
[Quicktime](#)

Siempre Salsa All Stars

Salsa Para Siempre

[Windows Media](#)

[Quicktime](#)



8. Pitingo/Souleria/Universal
9. Choco Orta/Ahora Mismo/Caminalo Records
10. Maña/Estamos Gozando Vol.2/Cookita Productions

By Nelson Rodríguez

1. Latin Giants of Jazz/Ven Baila Conmigo/Gigante
2. Mario Ortiz All Star Band/Tributo 45 Aniversario/Zamora Music
3. Orquesta America/Siempre a Punto/Lujuria
4. José Lugo Orchestra/Guasabara/Norte
5. Bobby Sanabria & TMSMO/Kenya Revisited/Jazzheads
6. Rigo y su Obra Maestra/Latin Feeling/Obra Maestra
7. Poncho Sánchez/Psychedelic Blues/Concord Picante
8. Jimmy Bosch/A Millon/JRGR
9. Manny Silvera & Origen/Bassed In America/Origen
10. Orestes Vilató/It's About Time/RAF CA

By Elmer González

1. Miguel Zenón/Esta Plena/Marsalis Music
2. Rubén Blades/Cantares del Subdesarrollo/Rubén Blades Productions
3. Mario Ortiz All Stars Band/Tributo 45 Aniversario/Zamora Music
4. Truco y Zaperoko/En Plena Rumba/Lujuria
5. Charlie Sepúlveda/Sepúlveda Blvd./Turnaround
6. Chembo Corniel/Things I Wanted to Do/Chemboro
7. Choco Orta/Ahora Mismo/Caminalo Records
8. Cachete Maldonado/Rumba Boricua Campesina/Bata Records
9. Yan Carlos & Mario Hernández/Recuerdos Que Lleva el Viento/Y.C.Artime
10. Edwin Clemente/Aqui Traigo La Rumba/Lujuria

By Chico Alvarez

1. Mark Weinstein & Omar Sosa/Tales From The Earth/Ota
2. Bobby Sanabria & TMSMO/Kenya Revisited/Jazzheads
3. Henry Brun & The Latin Playerz/Rhythms and Reeds/Pulsar
4. Mimi Jones/A New Day/Hot Tone Music
5. Pab/This is Afro-Cuban Funk/Rolling Pin Music
6. Chembo Corniel/Things I Wanted to Do/Chemboro
7. Mark Levine & The Latin Tinge/Off and On/Left Coast Clave
8. Rolando y Sus Cha-Chamucos/Cha Cha Cheando/RMP
9. Venissa Santi/Bienvenida/Sunnyside
10. Cuban Masters Ensemble/Homenaje a Tata Güines/Obanike

By Jesse "Chuy" Varela

1. Poncho Sánchez/Psychedelic Blues/Concord Picante
2. Brian Lynch Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra/Bolero Nights for Billie Holiday/Venus Records
3. Miguel Zenón/Esta Plena/Marsalis Music
4. Orestes Vilató/It's About Time/Rafca
5. Mark Levine & The Latin Tinge/Off & On/Left Coast Clave
6. Avance/Intocable/Mona Records
7. Various Artists/Jelly's Club Havana Compilation/Jelly's
8. Wayne Wallace/Bien Bien/Patois Records
9. Bobi Cespedes/Patakin/BC
10. Anna Estrada/Obsesion/Feral Flight Productions

By Guido Herrera

1. José Lugo Orchestra/Guasabara/Caminalo Records
2. Latin Giants of Jazz/Ven Baila Conmigo/Gigante Records
3. Bobby Sanabria & TMSM/Kenya Revisited/Jazzheads
4. Mario Ortiz Jr. All Star Band/Tributo 45 Aniversario/ZMG
5. Bebo and Chucho Valdés/Juntos Para Siempre/Calle 54
6. Orestes Vilató/It's About Time/Rafca
7. Tiempo Libre/Bach in Havana/Sony
8. The Cuban Masters Ensemble/Del Pasado al Presente/Obanike Music
9. Chembo Corniel/Things I Wanted to Do/Chemboro Records
10. Perico Hernández/Cuento en Clave/Guarapo Records



**CALIFORNIA'S FOURTH ANNUAL
"FESTIVAL DEL CUATRO"**

By Rudy Mangual

Photos ©2009 by Javier Valdez

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On Saturday, November 14, 2009, the Fourth Annual "Festival del Cuatro" was held at the Garrison Theater of Scripps College in the city of Claremont, California. Produced by the Festival del Cuatro Organization (a non-profit 501C3 organization) presided by Roberto Rivera, this year's event showcased the talents of cuatrista (cuatro player) and cuatro maker Yomi, along with those of fellow cuatrista Alvin Medina and his Sonora Borinqueña, plus singers Yezenia Cruz and Lorraine Torres. With the attendance of a good crowd, the festival brought a little bit of Puerto Rican culture, music and entertainment to Southern California by featuring the traditional and folkloric cuatro approach of Yomi Matos, as well as the more contemporary cuatro sounds of Alvin Medina's Sonora Borinqueña. Yezenia Cruz and Lorraine Torres offered the audience a colorful taste of the traditional styles of Puerto Rican folk singing, in conjunction with Elsie Medina, who handled the lead vocals of Sonora Borinqueña, along with her bandleading husband. In the end, it was the musicianship of Alvin Medina, as a talented cuatrista/vocalist, that truly impressed the audience and towards the end of their set the husband and wife team of Alvin and Elsie engaged in a battle of décimas, a call and response that had the women and men in the audience taking sides in a raucous, fun-filled performance. Performing Puerto Rican folk traditions, classical music and the always-popular salsa sounds, Medina easily won over the crowd, bringing the joy of music and dance into the heart of every member of the audience. A final encore brought all of the performers together for a beautiful end to a nostalgic evening. The Fourth Annual Festival del Cuatro was subsequently performed in the city of San Diego (on Friday, November 13th) and in the city of San Francisco (on Sunday, November 15th). Latin Beat Magazine salutes and congratulates Roberto Rivera and the entire Festival del Cuatro Organization, as well as all of this year's performers, for a memorable cultural experience.



From left to right are the festivals board members:
 Jim Howard - Co-Founder and Secretary
 Ajée Ortiz - Co-Founder and Chief Financial Officer
 Roberto Rivera - Co-Founder and President

Roberto Rivera was born in Newark, New Jersey, and relocated to Puerto Rico with his family at the very early age of six months. After returning to the U.S. mainland and graduating from Wesleyan Academy High School, he moved back to the island and attended the University of Puerto Rico in the coastal city of Cabo Rojo for three years. Subsequently, he earned a Bachelor's Degree from New Jersey's Rutgers University and started his career as a microbiologist. His love and passion for his native culture fueled his drive to earn three grants from the New Jersey State Council of the Arts' Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program. The grants provided an apprenticeship for Rivera with a nationally recognized instrument maker (Diomedes "Yomi" Matos), with whom he learned the art of crafting the Puerto Rican cuatro (a ten-string guitar). Rivera has worked with (and has crafted instruments) for Yomo Toro, Edwin Colón Zayas, Alvin Medina, Nicholas Radina, and other famous cuatro players. In 1994, he joined the Puerto Rican Cuatro Project (an organization whose main goal is to explore the origins of the Puerto Rican cuatro). Since 2005, Roberto Rivera has been the president of the Festival del Cuatro Organization in California, and has produced four annual festivals.

Born in the Puerto Rican city of Naranjito, **Yezenia Cruz** is an accomplished vocalist, who effortlessly blends jíbaro music with pop tendencies without missing a beat or losing the authentic essence of Puerto Rican folk music. This talented vocalist is equally comfortable while singing salsa, ballads and trio music, or while belting jíbaro verses to the accompanying, beautiful sounds of a cuatro. However, it is evident that her first love is singing Puerto Rican traditional music. Cruz had the privilege of being the only Puerto Rican folk singer to participate in 30 competitions between 1984 and 1989, and was awarded first-place ranking in all of them. By her 17th birthday, she was performing in Chicago and New York City, conducting workshops in public schools located in communities with a large Puerto Rican population. Yezenia Cruz has performed for Puerto Rico's governors and in numerous concerts organized by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and the Musical Arts Corporation (backed by the Puerto Rican Symphony Orchestra), as well as in events conducted at the Performing Arts Centers of San Juan, Caguas, and Guaynabo. She has several recordings to her credit, as well as the honor of participating in multiple special projects, including *Trompetas y Trovadores* and her collaborations with the late legendary Latin American folk artist Tony Croatto.



"The cuatro is my second flag!", declares **Diomedes "Yomi" Matos**, a native of Camuy who was surrounded by Puerto Rican jíbaro music and instrument-makers since his childhood. While all of his uncles and brothers crafted guitars and cuatros, Matos credits master instrument-maker Roque Navarro as his greatest influence. As a child, Matos would watch from the outside of Navarro's shop, amazed at the master's work. One day, Navarro invited the young child into the shop, and from then on, he was welcome to come and go as he pleased. By the age of twelve, Matos had built his first guitar. Up until today (and for many years) Yomi Matos is considered both an excellent performer of jíbaro music and a master artisan of the cuatro. The National Heritage Award-winning luthier William Cumpiano credits

Matos as "the master's master," while the legendary Puerto Rican cuatro musician Yomo Toro indicates that Matos has built all of his instruments, and they have traveled across the world with him. The Cuatro Project, based in New Brunswick, New Jersey, also honored Matos (in 1994) for his contributions to the conservation and advancement of Puerto Rican music and instrument-making. Matos' performances include numerous radio and television appearances in programs related to Puerto Rican culture and traditions. He has also participated in many school programs, and his instruments have been included in craft exhibitions and folk art programs throughout the nation. Yomi Matos' amazing artistry, devotion to his art, and generosity in sharing his knowledge and culture make him a very special ambassador of Puerto Rican culture and music.



Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Puerto Rican parents, **Alvin Medina** must be regarded, without a doubt, as the most exciting cuatrista to emerge from the new generation of cuatro players currently residing in the United States. Not only is he proficient as an excellent interpreter of Puerto Rican traditional jíbaro songs, but he is equally skilled while venturing into new territories, including the classical traditions and the international salsa scene. Medina began playing the cuatro at the age of six, with his father as his first instructor. He continued studying on his own, with the aid of recordings from various cuatro players and by taking pointers from other musicians. His formal music education came during his college years, and he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts with a major in music, which led to his current career as a music teacher in the state of Florida's educational system. Besides the Puerto Rican cuatro, Medina is equally proficient when playing the guitar, bass, tres, piano, bongó, and minor percussion instruments. He writes his own scores and arrangements, and enjoys singing "salsa dura" (old-school salsa), while leading his Sonora Borinqueña. This young man has performed with legendary cuatro masters such as Yomo Toro, Edwin Colón Zayas, Prodigio Claudio, Cristián Nieves, Modesto Nieves, Yomi Matos, and Pedro Guzmán, among others. In the salsa scene, he has worked with Tito Nieves, Larry Harlow, Manny Oquendo, Andy Montañez, Frankie Negrón and Johnny Pacheco, as well as with Latin jazz legends Paquito D'Rivera and Andy González. He performed at NYC's Carnegie Hall in 1995, and with the South Jersey's Philharmonic Orchestra (in the city of Voorhees) in 1998. His latest recording as a leader, titled *Eternal*, is a compilation of baroque/classical music scores performed on the Puerto Rican cuatro and endowed with a Latin fusion twist.

The Puerto Rican cuatro is Puerto Rico's national instrument. Its distinctive voice has been the heartbeat of jíbaro music, enjoyed by the native inhabitants since the early days of the island's colonization. According to William R. Cumpiano (Project Coordinator for The Puerto Rican Cuatro Project), the cuatro was created in the 17th century by Puerto Rican jíbaros inspired by the early string instruments brought to the island by the Spanish colonizers. This "cuatro antiguo" (early cuatro), built with materials at hand,



resembled various Renaissance-period string instruments, such as the *guitars* and *bandurrias*. The early cuatro was a four-stringed instrument with a distinctive keyhole-shaped sound box; hence its name "cuatro" (four). This early form of the instrument was preserved in the Puerto Rican countryside, up until the middle of the 20th century. The introduction of traveling Spanish singing groups called *tunas* and *estudiantinas* and their Italian-equivalent mandolin orchestras – which included mandolins, mandolas, mando-cellos and mando-basses – created a musical awakening across the Americas, enchanting audiences everywhere with their much more refined and sophisticated instruments. By this time, the "cuatro antiguo" began its descent into oblivion, while a new instrument – also called cuatro – emerged in northern Puerto Rican towns such as Arecibo. The new Puerto Rican cuatro was strung and tuned like the new Spanish *laúd* and played by using the new mandolin tremolo style of plucking. The instrument now included five pairs of metal strings and a keyhole shape, like that of a violin. This modern cuatro design has endured to this day as the national instrument of Puerto Rico. While stellar cuatro performers (such as Edwin Colón Zayas) use contemporary electric cuatros (resembling electric guitars) in their performances, the traditional wooden design of the acoustic cuatro models still prevail within players of all levels. Today, cuatros are built all over the world, even in such remote Asian nations as China and Japan.

Recommended cuatro discography:

1. Edwin Colón Zayas - Descargas
2. Yomo Toro - Las Manos de Oro
3. Pedro Guzmán - Jíbaro Jazz
4. Alvin Medina - Eternal
5. Various Artists - Puerto Rico in Washington
6. Prodigio Claudio - 30 Años de Sabor Boricua



The Seven Sins of Salsa

By Barbara Bernstein and Glen Minto aka: Salsero

Photos ©2009



So you wanna learn how to dance salsa? Maybe you're already an aspiring salsero/salsera wanting to take your dancing to the next level. Well, congratulations - you found us! We're about to show you how to take your dancing to the next level by listing things to avoid when dancing. After years of discussing some of the finer points of dancing, two dedicated salseros (Barb and Salsero) have compiled their experiences of how to get the most enjoyment and learning out of dancing salsa. "The Seven Sins of Salsa" is a list of common, all-too-human mistakes that most of us make at one time or another (the authors included!). Avoiding these mistakes will help you get the most out of your dancing. By gaining skill and making your dance experience a joyful way to exercise and connect with others, you will have heaps of fun dancing salsa and gradually learn to dance better and better.

So here goes...

The Seven Sins of Salsa

1a. Leading Yourself (for ladies) - by Barb

Dancing is a partnership activity that requires a coordinated effort by both the leader and the follower. As we all know, a person can feel and indeed be very alone in a crowded room, as connection is really a mental state. Likewise, one can dance with another person and not be responsive to them or be aware of them. For ladies, what this would mean is anticipating what the leader is doing and moving herself without waiting for or responding to his lead. Ladies often don't realize they are doing this when they are! A good example is that a lady may sense that a turn is coming and turn herself without waiting to be led. Or she may get the beginning of the lead and then move herself through the turn faster than the leader was leading her to turn. In both cases, she is not moving as he leads her, but has "taken over the lead." This is unsatisfying for the leader because, in a sense, he's not really needed. Even in Rueda de Casino, the follower should wait for the lead even though she knows the move!

1b. Out-Shining The Ladies (for men) - by Salsero

Let's face it guys, the ladies are just sexier than we are. Thank goodness too! But seriously, when the ladies look good, we look good. When the ladies don't look good dancing, we don't – no matter how good we are. Trust me on this one guys, you do NOT want to be one of those

salseros that does all the cool tricks, dips, and shines, with a lady that just started dancing two weeks ago – even if you know how to do the cool tricks, dips, and shines. What do I mean? Let's examine a typical scenario: You're dancing with the girl and suddenly you decide you want some "me time." You give the lady a free spin and let her do her thing while you do your thing. If you see the lady doesn't know what to do, or she's only doing the basic steps instead of a really cool eye-catching shine, then don't overdo it with your shine either. Always be mindful of your partner's ability to dance and the level she's dancing at. Doing so will go a long way in helping you master leading in general and help you increase your skill in dancing with multiple ladies. Think about it this way: Would you rather dance with one beautiful girl at a night club or all the beautiful girls at a night club? If the answer is with all the beautiful girls, then try not to commit the sin of out-shining your lady!

2a. Dancing Off Time/Out of Rhythm to the Music - by Barb

Ahhh... Dancing off time - the dancer's nightmare!

First, we have to discuss what this means. If a person breaks on 3 or 4 instead of his intended 1 or 2, but does so consistently, is that off time? The answer to that depends on your definition of "off time." My own concept of being off time is not dancing in the rhythm of the music. To me, dancing consistently on any beat may not be fully correct, but the timing is predictable to your partner. It's keeping the music's tempo, at least. The most egregious meaning of "off time" is dancing the 4 beats in what is really 4 and a half beats of music, or 3 and a half beats of music, etc. In this case, dancing off time means dancing independently of the music's rhythm or tempo. This creates a disconnect between the movement and the music. The music provides merely a pleasant background to move to, but has no true bearing on the timing of the steps. This scenario is the most serious definition of "off time" and the one that I'm addressing. Sometimes, in such a case, the dancer grasps the beat but cannot make their feet move to that beat – they need practice moving feet faster. If after a lot of practice, the individual still dances this way, it's a good bet they cannot feel the music's beat. It's very hard to teach someone to feel that "musical pulse" if they don't feel it on their own. It feels uncomfortable to his/her partner to dance off beat in this manner because at certain points in time during an 8-beat phrase, dancers are stable and at other points in time they can be moved into a step. If both partners are not in time, then one partner may be trying to move when the other is stable or vice versa. It creates a kind of dance argument or disagreement. The partners are not working together. If you have been told that you have difficulty hearing the beat, you can pay attention to your partner's beat and try to match it even if you aren't hearing the music's beat. That way you are still in-synch with your dance partner. This will go a long way to mitigating the effect of difficulty with the rhythm.

3. Thinking There's Only One Right Way to Dance Salsa - by Barb

People unfortunately sometimes believe that the way they dance is the only right way. We all pick how we like to do things based on principles of what we feel looks best or feels best and natural to us, so of course our way is the way we prefer! Yet, while everything is not "relative" and there are some rights and wrongs, there are also many "acceptable" ways to dance. In Casino Rueda for example, there are often countless ways to do any given move as well as ways to style it. It's best to think of these approaches as just that: variable approaches rather than right or wrong ways to dance. This is particularly important in making a dancer flexible so he/she can dance with anyone. We all dance comfortably with our dance class friends or dance teammates. However, the world is populated by many who aren't in that set, and to dance with them, a great deal of flexibility and acceptance is helpful!

4. Learning to Run Before You Walk - by Barb

This refers to dancers trying to learn advanced moves before they get a real handle on the basics. People are naturally attracted to flashy movements, but any lady will tell you that well executed and physically comfortable basics are more fun to do than poorly executed flashy moves. The latter are awkward and can even strain her while basic movements smoothly done can be quite satisfying and she'll show it in how she looks! So, for both leads and follows, be patient with studying the fundamentals as you learn them in layers. First, you get the moves, you smooth them out, and then you grasp them well enough to add styling/flairs. Finally, you grasp the basic elements at a deeper level...and the cycle continues. You learn this material better and better. It's like practicing scales for a musician; it's something you do for a very long time. Once you are very solid on fundamentals, the more advanced moves are easier to grasp, easier to do, and you will execute them more skillfully.

5. Not practicing good dance etiquette - by Barb

This covers a host of "sins!" People can take up too much space on a crowded floor; they can dance to show off ("the sin of pride"); they may invade their partner's space and dance too intimately, etc. There are many etiquette rules that can be breached. Essentially, etiquette is a matter of being considerate of all those around you-your partner as well as others. Good etiquette is also aided by common sense. You don't want to do tricks on a crowded club floor as not only you and your partner, but those around you could get hurt, for example. Likewise, dancing to strut your skills doesn't make your partner feel important. (See sin 1b above). Dancing too close to a partner may also make him/her uncomfortable. If you are watching your partner's reaction, you may be able to read how they are receiving you and make adjustments; it's a matter of caring enough to be sensitive to their signals. This applies equally to those around you at a club!

6a. Assuming That Errors Are Due to Your Partner - by Barb

Most mistakes have some influence from both partners. It's pretty rare that an error is due entirely to one person. If a couple is dancing, for example, and the lady doesn't have quite enough tension in her arms, the man must lead more forcefully to get her to follow. To avoid feeling yanked, the lady may loosen up further. The man must then lead even stronger. Many dance interactions are like this! Don't fall into the trap of thinking that mistakes require that the

other person make a correction. Another way to think about this is that if one of the partners changes what he/she does, that alone may avoid a problem, even if the move isn't totally perfect. You can be aware of how to correct an issue even if your partner isn't doing something right, and compensate for them so the move can be executed. You cannot change someone else, you can only change yourself, and people who can compensate for others are much loved on the dance floor as that takes skill and consideration! Think about this: In a class, the teacher can generally dance with everyone and get through all the moves, but the students may have trouble doing the moves with each other. The strength of the teacher's knowledge of the moves enables the partnership to get through the move adequately despite the student's mistakes. So, make it your business to strengthen your own dancing, and don't worry if your partner isn't always doing things the best way.

6b. It's Always The Guy's Fault - NOT!!! (for men) - By Salsero

Salsero here. Ladies, please move on to the next section...this is only for the guys.

Guys, have you heard that if anything goes wrong it's always the guy's fault? Quite frankly, most of the time, it's the ladies' fault. I mean, I've been hit in the face more times than I can remember (now I'm like a ninja expert at avoiding these unsuspecting hits from nowhere). Actually, the second to last time it happened, about a couple of months ago, I was in the bathroom bleeding for over an hour and had a bruise on my lip for DAYS (grrrr). The last time it happened, I didn't bleed at all but this girl hit me on my jaw so hard, it hurts when I try to yawn - even today! And that's supposed to be "My Fault???" But I digress - this article is about you, not me. Guys, we're men, and so we have to take being hit like a man. Feel me? If a lady hits you in the face, and you know it's entirely her fault, try to smile it off and proceed with extreme caution to finish dancing with her while you eagerly await the song to be over. Try not to storm off the dance floor and let the lady feel even more embarrassed than she does. That way, the other beautiful ladies who are waiting to dance with you and who saw what happened will know that you're a real gentleman. That being said, and to echo what Barb said, you have to be cognizant of your own leading ability. No one expects you to be perfect. But if you can develop an understanding of what went wrong AND WHY, you will be in a better position to try to avoid the same problem in the future. And so, while errors do happen, don't succumb to the sin of assuming that errors are due solely to your partner and try and not make the same error twice. I know, I'm preaching to the choir!

7. Not having fun!! - By Barb and Salsero

Taking yourself too seriously.

Dancing is often an expression of joy. Think of the victory dances players do after making a touchdown, for example. To keep that fresh, joyful approach alive on the floor, make sure you don't lose that outlook as you learn. Getting every step or technique just right takes a lot of practice. It isn't the end of the world to mess up a move or lose your balance on a double/triple turn. Most important is having a great time as you learn. That way you'll keep coming back and in time you will master what you practice! Remember that it's all about fun, and dance with love, joy, and playfulness in your heart. When your dancing comes from a place of loving music and movement, it will show through; and the technique will come in time. This attitude will make your own experience rich, and will make dancing fun for you and your partner. Even though we chose to focus on only seven sins or pitfalls of salsa dancing, don't think for a second that those are the only ones. However, avoiding the Seven Sins of Salsa will help you tremendously in improving your dancing experiences with your partner. Remember, no matter how many pitfalls there are, the rewards and pleasure of dancing Salsa far exceeds those pitfalls. So, cast aside your fears, shred your doubts, stop reading this article and get up and go out on the dance floor AND DANCE!!! (Did you remember to grab your partner?)

Barbara Bernstein is director of DanceInTimeProductions (www.DanceInTime.com), a Cuban salsa (rueda) group in the DC/VA/Baltimore area.



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