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Columns ⊕ ⊕ ⊕

DECEMBER 2011/JANUARY 2012 ISSUE

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QUÉ PASA IN LA

By Rudy Mangual



Louie Cruz Beltran
Paint the Rhythm
Windows Media
Quicktime

Cintron Band Live
Human Nature
Windows Media
Quicktime

Vanelis
Como Lo Extraño



**Windows Media
Quicktime**

Blessed with some of the best weather in the Western Hemisphere, Southern California is a paradise during the winter holiday season. You can surf in the morning, ski in the afternoon, and dance the night away or enjoy a live concert anywhere from Santa Barbara to San Diego, with Los Angeles right in between.

Nayibe

Borinquen

**Windows Media
Quicktime**

The world renowned **Hollywood Bowl** decks-the-halls with numerous musical events in December, including "A Chanticleer Christmas" (December 15), "Holiday Organ Spectacular" (December 16), "Holiday Sing-Along" (December 17), "A Swinging Christmas with John Pizzarelli and Jessica Molaskey (December 20), and New Year's Eve with Pink Martini (December 31). For tickets and more information, visit www.hollywoodbowl.org

Luis González

Spain

**Windows Media
Quicktime**

In keeping up with Puerto Rican holiday traditions, guitarist Ray Carrion y Los Jibaros will be hosting a live paranda on December 11 at Rudy's Baja Grill in Los Angeles.

Rolando Sanchez

Vamonos De Fiesta

Windows Media**Quicktime**

In Hollywood, the popular **El Floridita Restaurant's** schedule of live music events features performances by the groups Rumbankete (December 3 and December 10); Johnny Polanco y su Conjunto Amistad (every Monday night); Milonga Tango (December 7); Victor Cegarra (December 8), and a New Year's Eve Salsa Dance Party on December 31. Visit www.elfloriditarestaurant.com for more information and reservations.

Steve Pouchie

Watch Ur Wallet

**Windows Media
Quicktime**

The Granada nightclub/tapas restaurant/dance studio in Alhambra features live music and DJs spinning the best of salsa and bachata Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. This year's New Year's Eve dance extravaganza headlines Angel Lebron & His Classic Band on December 31.

Havana Mania Restaurant in Redondo Beach features live music every Friday and Saturday night with the amazing vocals of Candi Sosa.

Somos Son

Bilongo

**Windows Media
Quicktime**

Also happening around town this holiday season:

Salsa singer **Tito Rojas** will be performing at The Conga Room at L.A. Live on December 1st. The **Borinquen Post 508** will be hosting "Salsa con Santa" featuring the music of Phil Robinson & Sonora Borinqueña on December 10. The duo "2 Hombres" featuring **Eliseo Borrero** will be performing at Ortega 120 in Redondo Beach, Saturdays December 3rd and December 17th. The popular **Chino Espinoza y Los Dueños del Son** perform at Steven's Steak House in the City of Commerce on December 15. The **Louie Cruz Beltran Latin Jazz Band** will be performing at the Los Angeles Farmer's Market in West Los Angeles on December 22 as part of the holiday's Latin Jazz Music Series. "The Annual Salsa Mambo Festival 2012" runs December 29th through January 2nd at the Doral Princess Resort in Palm Springs.

The Estrada Brothers

Mr. Ray

**Windows Media
Quicktime**

Please support all your local artists and musicians and their venues. Peace.

Manny Silvera

Bassed in America

**Windows Media
Quicktime****A BITE FROM THE APPLE****By Vicki Solá****Bobby Matos**

Cuchy Frito Man

**Windows Media
Quicktime**

Chembo Corniel
Buena Gente
**Windows Media
Quicktime**

Maña
Tranquilito
**Windows Media
Quicktime**



The Bronx-born vocalist simply identified as Sol has released a salsa production titled "La Que Manda Soy Yo" (Muziq Records), produced by Ernie Acevedo.

Sol was exposed to Latin music during her childhood by her father Julio, a percussionist who could listen to any particular Latin album and name every performer on any given track, while he played congas and her mother Santa danced to the rhythms.

At age nine, upon becoming a finalist during a neighborhood audition, she went on to perform in a

Central Park charity event as the opening act for Brenda K. Starr, Coro, and Cynthia & Fat Boys (very popular entertainers in the 1980s). "This was the match that lit the fire," Sol says.

She attended the Rafael Hernández Junior High School for the Performing Arts, where she realized that although she liked R&B and "free-style," something was missing. It was at a New York City club where her life would change, as she found her musical passion while witnessing a performance of Frankie Ruiz and Los Hermanos Colón.

"This is what I was missing; the rhythm, the dance, the sound, the live music!" exclaimed the glamorous young singer. Several years later, Los Hermanos Colón invited her to record the song "Cuando Una Mujer" on their album "Abriendo Nuevos Caminos." Her enthusiasm for Latin music and commitment to keeping it alive were very evident during her appearance on my radio program.

Sol features the cream of the crop on her CD: René Leyva, J.R. de Jesús, and Ray Fuentes (piano); Louie Arona (bass); Charlie García, Willie Álvarez, and Pablo Santaella (trombones); Raúl Agraz and Miguel "El Zurdo" Rodríguez (trumpets); Roberto Vilera (congas, bongó, and timbal); Jessica Rodríguez, Willie Villegas, and Ernie Acevedo (congas); Nelson "Aceite" Román, Louie "Campana" Hernández, and Richie Bastar (bongó and cencerro); Jesús Serrano (maracas and güiro), and Junior Rivera (tres).

Coros are handled by Acevedo, Awilda "La Cantante" Morales, Liz Soto, Eddie Rosado, Johnny Ortiz, Alex Rodríguez, Sammy Rosa, Anthony Álvarez, Marcos Colón, Aris Martínez and Gilbert Velásquez. Sol's daughter Maxine Ashley appears as guest vocalist.

Willie Ruiz, José Tavares, René Leyva, Omar Castaño, Pablo "Chino" Núñez, J.R. de Jesús, and Charlie García provided the arrangements. I've said it before and I'll say it again: It's so wonderful to see talented members of the next generation taking up the torch and running with it!

"El Rumbero Griego," trombonist/bandleader **Demetrios Kastaris** (known for his role as leader of Latin-Jazz Coalition), is cooking up a recording project with his new group, Conjunto Katharí. Founded by Kastaris and his wife Hilda, this group combines Cuban and Puerto Rican music with African American gospel sounds.

As Kastaris explaining it: "Conjunto means musical ensemble in Spanish, and the Greek word katharí means pure and clean," Therefore, the name of his new group literally means "pure and clean musical ensemble."

"Our mission," he continues, "is to perform very spiritually uplifting music... our instrumentation is four trombones in four-part harmony, three percussionists, three singers in harmony, piano, and bass, plus invited soloists." He cites Willie Colón as a major influence on the band's sound, adding that "the trombone can sound very powerful, while at the same time very pretty and sweet, especially in four-part harmony."

Conjunto Katharí debuted in December of 2010 at Flushing Town Hall, with trombonist and conch shell player Steve Turré appearing as guest artist. So far, the band has completed three tracks

and is working on the rest of the production. The number "Vamos Escalando Peldaños (Let's Go Climbing Up Stairs)" includes solos by Kastaris (trombone) and Samuel Martínez (cuatro), and also features Dr. Terry Greene II and David Russell (trombones), Ray Campos (bass trombone), Sammy Navarro (lead vocals), Edy Martínez (piano), John Benítez (bass), and Orestes Abrantes (congas, requinto, chekeré, clave, and cencerro.)

Appearing on the traditional gospel number "Wade in the Water" are Pete McGuinness (arranger and trombone), Melvin Smith (tenor sax), Wesley Reynoso (piano and organ), Benítez (bass), Sam Knight (drums), Kastaris (bass trombone), Melvin Smith (tenor sax), and Dawn Tallman (lead vocals).

"Sí Tuvieras Fé Como Un Grano de Mostaza (If You Had the Faith of a Mustard Seed)" displays the talents of Kastaris, Greene, Russell, Campos, Navarro, Martínez, Benítez, and Abrantes.

DJ Jeff's "Hot Pick of the Month": Isaac Delgado's "Mujer Celosa."

DJ Jeff's favorite CD of 2011: Grupo Galé's "Deluxe" (Codiscos).

Future laser luster... In the beginning of 2012, singer/composer/ arranger/bandleader Gilberto Velásquez, a.k.a. "Don Sonero," will be releasing his first production.

Around town... On the West Gate Lounge's roster: Cubanosón (Dec. 3), Los Hermanos Moreno (Dec. 10), Eddie Torres' Mambo Kings, featuring the Eddie Torres All Star Dancers (Dec. 17), and bringing in 2012, Luisito Rosario & Rumba del Barrio (Dec. 31).

I wish you and yours the happiest of holidays and the best New Year ever! ¡Hasta la próxima!



LATIN BEAT UPDATE

By Nelson Rodríguez

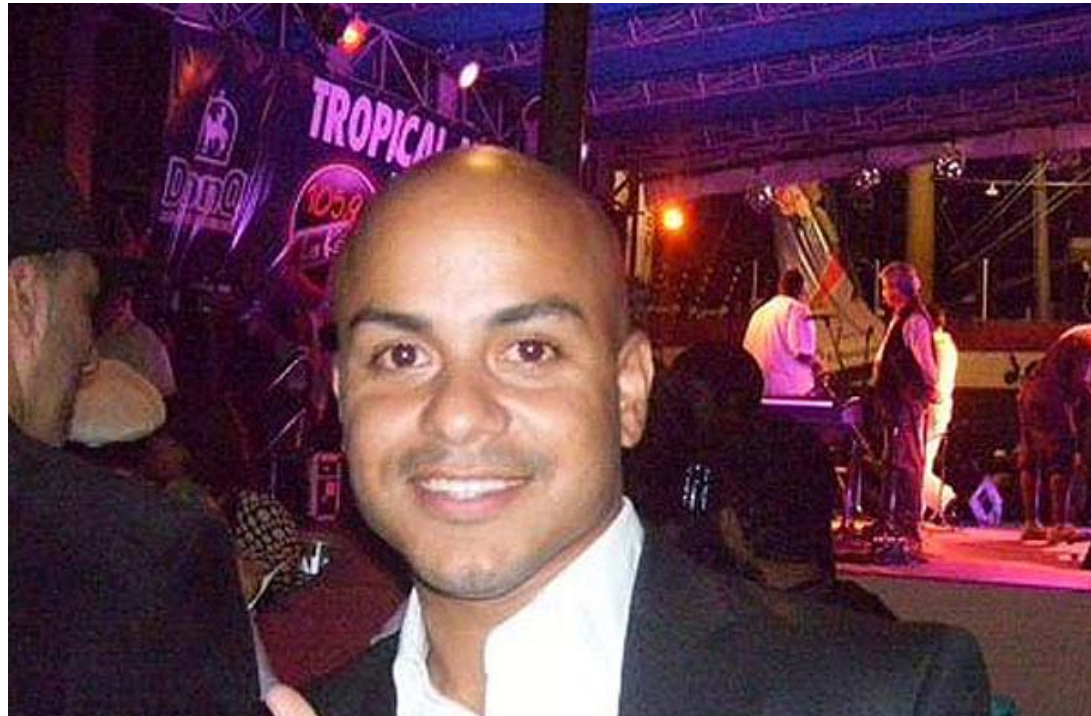
Looking back at 2011, it's interesting to note that there were virtually no major label releases of Latin music, since the artists that were on major labels have launched off on their own. What we see is more exposure through social media and smaller publicity representatives (mostly for Latin jazz). There were many 2011 releases that we reviewed in Latin Beat and I'd like to give credit to all the great acts that graced our online magazine.

Once again, the releases were equally divided between Latin jazz and salsa, while merengue has taken a back seat to bachata, and the Latin hip-hop nation (reggaetón) has virtually disappeared. Salsa bands adding reggaetón to their songs are beating a dead drum that wore off many years ago... True salsa fans, including the younger aficionados, prefer either the commercial romantic salsa or the hardcore format without the addition of reggaetón.

Some of the best salsa of 2011 included releases by Willy Torres, Walter A. Torres, José Raúl

"Lips" Morales, Santiago All-Stars, Frankie Morales, Sonando, Williamsburg Salsa Orchestra, Fay Roberts & Charangoa, Jorge Cordero y Los Gran Daneses, 8 y Más, Son de Tikizia, Willie Panamá, Adriel González, El Maestro Seda, José Rizo's Mongorama, Mambo Legends Orchestra, Lucky 7 Mambo, Caché, Lisandro Torres, Sonido Criminal, Melena, Choco Orta, Sol, Grupo Salsafón, Victoria Sanabria, Moisés Cancel, Tito Rojas, Charlie Cruz, CaboCubaJazz, Villariny Salsa Project, Wito Colón, Marco Toro y su Emsemble, Nelson, Janeen Puente, Rumbaché, Rumbankete, Montuno Swing, Henry Fiol, Johnny Ray, Javier Plaza & Son-Risa, Grupo Arcaño, Tiempo Libre, Timbalive, A&C La Banda, La Contrabanda, La Surcusal SA, Héctor Iván Rivera, Carlos Cascante y su Tumbao, La Más Orquesta, Lázara López /Gerardo Rosales, Orquesta Changüí, Doble Jugada, Don Adolfo, Son Del Salón, Alex Wilson, Calle Facción, Rey Ruiz, Mi Solar, Sammy García y El Poder de Puerto Rico, and Sirak & Sonora Antillana.

And the Latin jazz world was graced with some great recordings by Latineo, T.K. Blue, Nelson Rivero, Newton Velázquez, Kevin Hart's Latin Jazz Quintet, Michel Herrera, Arturo Sandoval, Dave Valentín, Michel Camilo, Miguel Zenón, Guisando Caliente, Henry Brun & The Latin Playerz, Bobby Matos' Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble, Wayne Wallace's Latin Jazz Quintet, Mark Weinstein, Arturo O'Farrill, Edwin Clemente, Panchito, Daniel Smith, The Curtis Brothers, Luis Conte, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Roberto Quintero, John Santos Sextet, Steve Kroon, Adam Cruz, Kiki Sánchez, William Johnson, Silvano Monasterios, Jane Bunnet/Hilario Durán, Harold López Nussa, Jerry González, Sammy Figueroa & Latin Jazz Explosion, Bill O'Connell, Maraca, and Claudio Roditi.



During my tenure with RMM, I became a huge fan of **Michael Stuart**, who has recorded the best CD of his entire career: "Tribute to Louie Ramírez- Amanece y Sigue," which offers something that is not commonly found in the recordings made nowadays in Puerto Rico: The solos provided by Luisito Quintero, Alfredo de la Fé, Raúl Agraz, Yomar Méndez, and Jesús Menudo. These improvisations may not be long as the ones found in Ramírez's original recordings, but they are refreshing indeed. Michael Stuart delivers a great project when you consider what is happening on the Puerto Rican airwaves. It's a good tribute to Louie Ramírez, and it is hoped that a younger generation will now be able to discover this great man's musical genius.

As we approached the last month of 2011, we received an EP released by Marc Bishoff's **Doble Jugada**, featuring the vocalists Nando Vanín and Fabián Nodarse. "Me Lleva y Me Eleva" can easily become a huge commercial hit.

Jesús Alejandro Pérez (Niño Jesús) has dedicated himself in the past few years to the exploration of his Cuban roots, starting with the CD "Cafecito Cubano," which included the awesome jam "Te Juro, Suelo," followed up by his most recent recording "Regreso a Casa," in which Niño combines his voice with those of Ariel Betancourt and Gilberto Naranjo.

One of today's best jazz bass players is **Christian McBride**, who just released "Conversations With Christian," a project that unites him with Sting, Roy Hargrove, Regina Carter, George Duke, Dr. Billy Taylor, Hank Jones, and Chick Corea, among many others. My favorite Latin jazz track is "Guajeo y Tumbao," featuring Eddie Palmieri.

Bio-Ritmo has proven over the years its capacity to produce a consistently creative sound. In its latest CD "La Verdad," the band excels on "Verguenza," "Caravana del Vejigante," and the title track. This is by far Bio-Ritmo's best CD (It is also available on DVD and vinyl formats).

The recognition awarded to flutist **Carlos Jiménez** (leader of Mambo Dulcet) has been growing with each of his recordings, making a name for himself in the Latin jazz world. His latest album ("Red Tailed Hawk") includes names like Alfredito Valdés Jr., Orlando Marín, Edy Martínez, Lewis Kahn, Sonny Bravo, and Pete Nater.

Another good Latin jazz release is "Mr. P.," recorded by pianist **Rick Arroyo's Latin Jazz Ensemble** as a tribute to Eddie Palmieri, with special guests Artie Webb and Johnny "Dandy" Rodríguez. My picks include "Flight to Jordan," "Song for My Father," "Equinox," "Blue Bossa," "Feeling the Change," and the title track.

Last month we mentioned the Berlin-based band **Mi Solar**, whose 2008 debut ("Amistad") contained the hits "Amistad," "Mi Solar," "Dile a Catalina," "Profundo," and "Tal Como Eres." Mi Solar is one of Europe's finest bands.

From France comes the self-titled EO of **Conga Libre & Reynier Silegas** (formerly known as Banda de Santiago de Cuba.) This EP is a good preview of what the band will be offering in 2012.

Plena is in good hands with **Anibal De Gracia & Batukealo's CD "50 Años de Fiesta,"** which includes some very nice salsa versions of "El Negro Bembón" (with vocals by Osvaldo Román)

and "Besitos de Coco" (with vocals by the late Giovanni Lugo).

A new voice from Venezuela is presented by the composer identified as **Nestor (Guaniré)**, whose debut ("En Caracas") includes the potential hits "Somos Víctimas," "Dueño de tu Amor," "Me Quiero Refrescar," and "Ven Que Te Invito".

Percussionist **Louie Cruz Beltrán** offers his latest CD ("Paint the Rhythm"), backed by a cast of talented artists, such as Hubert Laws, Poncho Sánchez, Giovanni Hidalgo, Justo Almario, Abrahám Laboriel, Ramón Flores, Otmaro Ruiz, Oskar Cartaya, René Camacho, Joe Rotondi, and Eric Jorgenson.

The Curtis Brothers (Luques and Zaccai) delivered one of last year's pleasant Latin jazz surprises, and now are back with the disc "Completion of Proof," featuring Brian Lynch, Ralph Peterson and Donald Harrison (former members of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers), along with Pedro Martínez and Joe Ford.

The Santiago All-Stars, led by conguero Jorge Hasbun, have released a beautiful CD/DVD combo that not only confirms their credentials as the hottest band from Chile, but must also be regarded as one of the best recordings of 2011. "Joya y Rareza" credits Ricky González as musical director, as well as soloist on the track "Bochinchosa," which also includes Jimmy Sabater as guest vocalist. Ricky González and Angel Fernández handled all the arrangements.

One of the best Christmas releases of the past decade must be the CD "A Very Latin Christmas," recorded by **Henry Brun & The Latin Playerz**, who managed to create the perfect blend of traditional and party music that everyone will enjoy throughout the holidays. The musicians do a superb job, and Judi D'Leon shines on vocals.



DESDE BORINQUEN

Por: Elmer González



La Fiesta De Tite Curet Alonso. El 2011 finalizó con un evento musical que atrajo la atención de miles de boricuas: El especial para la televisión sobre la obra musical de Tite Curet Alonso, producido por el Banco Popular de Puerto Rico.

El evento fue precedido por un gran despliegue promocional que incluyó visitas de varios artistas por las universidades locales con conferencias ilustradas sobre la vida del compositor de "Periódico de ayer".

El evento tuvo un elemento adicional de interés pues durante una década la música de Curet Alonso estuvo ausente de la radio debido a disputas entre los radiodifusores y la entidad ACEMLA que dirigía, hasta hace un par de años, las regalías de derechos de autor de la mayoría de las composiciones de Tite. La ausencia de su música trajo consigo un desconocimiento de su trabajo en toda una generación de jóvenes. Se espera que el especial genere información e interés por la obra del ilustre compositor salsero quien murió el 5 de agosto de 2003.

Luego de su difusión televisiva, el público podrá tener un DVD y un CD de audio de este trabajo. El dinero recaudado por las ventas estará destinado a sufragar programas de educación de música popular en diferentes escuelas locales.

El especial incluye un buen número de artistas locales e internacionales interpretando temas de Curet Alonso. Entre otros, sobresalen Lalo Rodríguez con el grupo Truco y Zaperoko, la venezolana Trina Medina con "El lamento de Concepción", Andy Montañés, Cheo Feliciano,

Danny Rivera, Orquesta La 33 de Colombia, Calle 13, Rubén Blades, Jerry Medina con el Apollo Sound y Yuba Iré, entre otros.

Los arreglos son distintos a los arreglos originales del repertorio. Ricardo Pons, José Lugo y Omar Silva realizaron una labor excelentes como arreglistas. El repertorio incluye piezas como: "Plantación adentro", "Esto es el guaguancó", "Pa' los caseríos". "Mi triste problema", "Las caras lindas", "Cucubano", "Barrunto" y "Marejada feliz", entre otros.

El especial de dos horas titulado "Sonó, sonó", se pautó como una difusión simultánea en los principales canales locales de televisión el 4 de diciembre.

Yanni En El Castillo Del Morro. Al momento de redactar estas notas, se anunciaba la presentación del tecladista griego Yanni en un concierto al aire libre en las inmediaciones del Castillo del Morro en el Viejo San Juan.

Se anunció que sería un espectáculo de luces y de música electrónica en las noches del 16 y 17 de diciembre que se estaría transmitiendo en diferido por la cadena de televisión Public Broadcasting System (PBS) en los Estados Unidos. Además, se estaría produciendo un CD y un DVD del espectáculo.

El gobierno de Puerto Rico, a un año antes de las elecciones, anunció que estaría "regalando" seis mil quinientos boletos en un espectáculo cuyo precio de admisión es de 150 dólares por persona.



