Welcome to Volume 21, Number 5, June/July 2011 issue of Latin Beat Magazine Online. The multi-talented Elaine Elias graces the cover of this summer 2011 issue, as she celebrates the release of her latest recording, Light My Fire. This Brazilian goddess of Latin jazz is at the peak of her career and sounding better than ever. We also welcome Michael Davidson (Professor of Music at the University of Richmond, Virginia) to the world of LBMO via his article Palo! (An interview with Steve Roitstein leader of the Miami, Florida based Afro-Cuban funk band “Palo”). Our New York City based photographer Allen Spatz has also been very busy capturing the Latin beat of “The Big Apple” as you will see.

Latin Beat Magazine finally joined “Facebook” and “Twitter”, so drop us a line and tell your friends. Also check out “¡Super Boleteria!” throughout the magazine. This is a new service that sells tickets to music concerts, theater shows, and sports events nationwide and abroad. Click on the link and check it out. On the top right border of the site you can select your choice language (Español/English) to browse. ¡Super Boleteria! is an affiliate of Ticketnetwork.com.

As always, Latin Beat Magazine Online (LBMO) also brings you exciting monthly columns from New York City (by Vicki Sola), Los Angeles (from yours truly), Puerto Rico (by Elmer Gonzalez en Español), and the popular Latin Beat Music Update column by Nelson Rodriguez (covering the latest Latin music scene from all over the world). Music news, national and international independent hit parades, concerts and CD reviews, calendar of events, streaming music tracks and music videos complete the Latin Beat Magazine Online experience.

Musically yours, Rudy & Yvette Mangual
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ELIANE ELIAS SPEAKS: A DIALOGUE WITH BRAZIL’S MOST RENOWNED PIANIST

By Luis Tamargo
Photos ©by Bob Wolfenson

The Brazilian pianist/singer/composer/arranger Eliane Elias was born in São Paulo in 1960, when her mother, a classical pianist named Luci Elias made the following comment upon giving birth to said offspring: “She has the hands of a pianist!” Amilton Godoy (leader of the legendary Zimbo Trio) became her piano teacher in the early 1970s. By the age of 17, she joined a touring band led by the popular guitarist Toquinho and the great singer/songwriter Vinicius de Moraes; but she felt the need to seek wider horizons, as a jazz artist, and this is why she moved to N.Y. in 1981. Equally capable of handling classical music, jazz, and various Latin American genres, Elias offers a wide range of valuable comments during the following interview:

Luis Tamargo: You honored the legacy of Brazil’s most iconic composer on a couple of heartfelt Blue Note releases—Eliane Elias Plays Jobim (1990) and Eliane Elias Sings Jobim (1998). While listening to these recordings, I realized that the way in which you vocalized Jobim’s melodies was similar to the way you would do it on the piano. Is it the same voice, but on a different instrument?

Eliane Elias: Yes and no. What I can do as a pianist is a lot more than what I can do with my voice as an instrument.
The type of phrasing, the way it feels, yes, I would do it the same way because that’s how I feel the music. But with the voice, I have a smaller range to deal with, so it is different than the way I could do it on the piano, but the general feel is the same.

LT: I wonder if you started singing because you would write certain things that could not be properly phrased by instruments.
EE: Yes. I started doing that on my very first album (Amanda, Passport Jazz, 1984), which I recorded with Randy (Brecker), and then I did some vocals on other subsequent recordings, in which I employed my voice as an instrument, and because I have a certain way of using rhythm and phrasing, and felt that it was the way that I wanted to hear it, the voice took the place of the instrument.

LT: On the CD The Three Americas (Blue Note, 1997), you sought to achieve an organic blend of what Dizzy Gillespie once defined as “Pan-American Music,” meaning the fusion of the main musical genres of the Western Hemisphere. By the way, was this the first time that you recorded a tango-style composition?
EE: Yes, that particular tune was called Chorango. It starts as a chorinho, and then becomes a tango. It was an interesting rendition, as it included a violin and a little bit of accordion.

LT: Along with other phenomenal pianists (Bebo and Chucho Valdés, Chano Domínguez, Michel Camilo, etc), you played a vital role in Fernando Trueba's stunning musical documentary “Calle 54” (Miramax, 2001). I felt that you were capable of transforming the track titled Samba Triste into something entirely personal.
EE: Thank you, I was quite honored to be part of that documentary. I think all the artists chosen by Fernando Trueba to be there had their own individual voices and had contributed so much to this music. I was invited to represent Brazil as an instrumentalist, and it was really special to work with Fernando, who came to talk to me and mentioned that he would like for me to play Samba Triste, and he remembers how I reacted because I would only perform a tune if I feel it, and I had never heard this particular tune. But when I heard it, I really came to admire Fernando Trueba’s degree of artistic sensitivity, because he chose a tune that I immediately connected to, and that I played with great pleasure.

LT: During you mid-teens, back in São Paulo, you cultivated an appreciation for Bill Evans by writing...
out his recorded performances. Which explains the exquisite nature of the post-mortem tribute titled *Eliane Elias Sings and Plays Bill Evans* (Blue Note, 2007). Is it true that you saw him playing in Brazil when you were barely 15 years old?

**EE:** Oh, yes, it is true. Bill Evans was a tremendous influence on my music throughout my adolescence, and I did write down several transcriptions of his solos; I played along with his records. I love his harmonies and melodies, the way he approaches the piano. It’s such a beautiful sound!

**LT:** I was quite impressed with your most recent release (*Light My Fire*, Concord Picante, 2011), as it seems to be more rhythmically diverse and aggressive than some of your prior recordings.

**EE:** Well, thank you. This record goes beyond bossa nova and brings all elements of Brazilian music, including some Afro-Brazilian rhythms, the rhythms from northeastern Brazil, and I’m very happy to bring forth these elements. The title track (*Light My Fire*) is a very sexy, slow, soulful bossa-style version of The Doors’ hit.

**LT:** In addition to your marvelous rhythmic section, the CD *Light My Fire* features some wonderful guests, including the singer-composer from Bahia named Gilberto Gil.

**EE:** Yes. Gilberto is one of the great composers from Brazil, and it was fantastic to have him on three vocal duets. It was really joyful to bring some elements from the music of Bahia, which I have been including more and more on my records. This is music that has influenced me a lot. I love Bahia!

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**Los Ciegos del Barrio Concert Pictorial**
Los Ciegos Del Barrio ("the blind boys of the neighborhood) is an all-blind multi-genre Latin American music band, based in the New York City Tri-State area. The group specializes in the genres of merengue, salsa, cumbia, reggaetón, and rock among others in both English and Spanish languages. They have recorded several albums and singles since they began in 2000.

Derek Suarez - Bass, keyboards, percussion and most of the lead vocals.
Machete - Piano, keyboards, harmonica, accordion, percussion and lead vocals.
Jaime Diaz - Rhythm guitar, bass and vocals.
Jimmy Fontañez (J Funk) - Percussion and Vocals.
Tony Jimenez - Percussion.
Angel Dueño - Percussion. He is featured occasionally and is the only member who is not visually impaired. He lives in upstate New York.

About National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments

Napvi.org
NAPVI is a national, non-profit, independent organization that enables parents to find information and resources for their children who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities. NAPVI provides leadership, support, and training to assist parents in helping their children reach their full potential. NAPVI is dedicated to:

- Giving emotional support
- Parent education
- Initiating outreach programs
- Networking

Advocating for the educational needs and welfare of children who are blind or visually impaired

Contacts

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Services

Support for Parents

- Provides a network with other parents through NAPVI's database by eye condition, age, geographic location, educational and/or social needs
- Publishes AWARENESS, a magazine featuring information on the special needs of children with visual impairments, including child development, education, medical updates, personal articles written by parents, and resources available on the local, regional, and national levels
- Offers information through conferences, workshops, and publications that help you meet the special needs of your child(ren) with visual impairments
- Helps parents become a part of a national advocacy group that fosters communication and coordination of services among federal, state, and local agencies and organizations involved with people with visual impairments and that increases public awareness and of children with visual impairments so they are more readily accepted by society
- Offers scholarship opportunities and advocacy skills that advance leadership potential and confidence
- Helps parents connect with other parents and professionals through state and local NAPVI chapters, which receive consultative and financial support from NAPVI National
- Allows parents to utilize NAPVI's national support and information network through our website, phone, and mail correspondence Helps parents save money with special membership discounts on conference registrations and publications

Eligibility: Parents of children who are visually impaired, blind, or visually impaired with additional disabilities, including those who are partially sighted or have low vision.

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What do you call a symphonic hornist who switches to piano, wins a Grammy, becomes the musical director for Willy Chirino, and performs piano with his own Afro-Cuban funk band (Palo!)? You call him — Steve Roitstein! Upon moving to Miami in the 80s, Steve began to absorb the Cuban sound of Southern Florida. He worked as a pianist with Carlos Oliva & Los Sobrinos del
Juez (The Judge’s Nephews). Steve states, "As you know, piano in a Cuban group is a percussion instrument, and if you’re not on clave, it’s a disaster. I was on clave some of the time." Learning the clave’s rhythmic nuances was only a part of his journey into Cuban music; as Steve began to write, arrange and produce for the Grammy-winning singer Willy Chirino. As a boy, he always preferred the popular African-American sounds of James Brown and Earth Wind & Fire. When a bass player didn’t show up for a group he was organizing, Steve started sequencing the bass part and rock drum kicks, hired Cuban American musicians, and this is how Palo! was born. I had the pleasure of catching a live show by Palo! on the beach in Miami. The next day, Steve and I sat down in Little Havana to talk about the Miami sound, Cuban music, and his own endeavors and accomplishments, as documented by the following comments...

The Interview

Miami Sound 1.0:
Pedro Pan’s Children

After hanging around with Willy Chirino, I believe that there is and was a Miami Latin sound. Carlos Oliva’s Los Sobrinos del Juez, and Chirino simultaneously created the sound. Carlos and Willie were both Pedro Pan (Peter Pan) children. During the early 60s, the Catholic Church of both Cuba and the U.S., particularly the Archdiocese of Miami, sponsored a plan for Cuban parents who didn’t want their children living under communism. Children were brought to the U.S. without their parents, and placed into camps and foster homes. In those times, the Cubans were already hearing U.S. pop music in the island from such U.S. radio stations as WFUN or WQAM. By injecting that awareness into the Cuban children’s newly found U.S. culture, a Miami sound was developed. These children came to the U.S. and adapted to a new culture, but didn’t forget about their Cuban roots. These Cuban-Americans performed gigs for both non-Latin and Latin audiences, and in those days, Latin gigs were Cuban gigs. Los Sobrinos del Juez and Willy Chirino were a natural byproduct of the music that they loved. In fact, I did a song with Willy — a potpourri/medley he called Yo Soy un Tipo Tipico (I Am a Typical Guy) — and it switched back and forth between (North) American music and Cuban music. The lyrics were about having one foot in Cuba and one foot in the U.S. Those guys were the Miami 1.0 sound, and if you go back and listen to some of their music from the 70s, you’ll hear what I’m talking about... It’s got clave and it’s got Cuban soul, but it’s got the electric guitar, and you can hear the fusion of different musical styles from both countries.

Miami Sound 2.0

Clouds and Miami Sound Machine were doing the same kind of local gigs. When Miami Sound Machine broke through to the mainstream — it’s what I call the Miami Sound 2.0. Miami Sound Machine created their sound in the 1980s. They had some great songs that were sung in English (Dr. Beat and Conga) composed by Enrique "Kiki" Garcia, who was their drummer at that time. The group had great timing and great production. 2.0 was taking the Cuban-American sound to a different level: a worldwide platform. Conga drums and the Cuban piano sound went into their tunes. That’s Cuba right there! Even when you listen to KC and the Sunshine Band — which is not a Latin band and hear Harry Wayne Casey (KC), who went to school in Hialeah (a Miami suburb/municipality mostly inhabited by Cubans)—, you can hear the Cuban rhythmic underpinning
of his songs. There’s some clave in the mix; a little bit here and there. It doesn’t sound Latin, but it has a Latin suggestion to it. Not nearly as Latin as Santana, but I’m talking about the vibe of the bass part and the keyboard parts — I hear a Latin influence there.

Miami Sound 3.0

After Miami Sound Machine, the subsequent sound of the 1980s (and then moving into the 1990s) became the Miami Sound 3.0. The Spam All-stars were influential in creating this sound. If one focuses on Miami — culturally and geographically — the city has become a rich environment for this kind of fusion. I told Carlos Oliva that Palo is just a branch of the tree that he and people like Chirino planted. I consider my group Palo a member of the 3.0 sound. Groups like Suénalo, Locos por Juana and some timba bands are also a part of this sound. Another 3.0 group is the Spam All-Stars created by Andrew Yeomanson, who calls himself DJ Le Spam, but can play the turntable as an instrument. He also has a massive knowledge of music. He’s a well-rounded musician with an awareness of an entire universe of music and has the ability to produce a ‘sound’ that he wants to create.

Reggaetón

Reggaetón, in my opinion, is a narrow slice of rhythms...and they (the reggaetón acts) never go outside a particular rhythm. There is a market for it...but people have told me that it’s died off a little bit before reaching its peak. The people who created reggaetón are not people who came from the tradition that we’re talking about.

Timba

I feel that timba is a particular sub-genre of Cuban salsa. If you listen to timba, a lot of its rhythms and melodies tend to fall into a particular pattern. Timba in Havana has been somewhat isolated, and it developed in a particular environment where the music and fans developed together, in a particular time and place; and in a particular style of dancing. The rest of the world missed it — didn’t live it and wasn’t there. Therefore, many dancers who like “salsa gorda”: don’t like timba, because they don’t feel that it is danceable. They feel that the rhythm is not as “sabroso” (not as pleasant) to dance to. So it seems to me that the people who like timba are the people from Cuba who were there when the music developed in the island. That was the music that they partied to, and this is why they like it! Mostly new immigrants from Cuba play this style of Cuban music.
Salsa

I think the roots are Cuban, but Puerto Ricans had a lot to do with the music we call salsa. The island of Puerto Rico has turned out many great artists, and you have to consider it on the same level as Cuba, as to what happened in New York. Fania created the sound that went worldwide. When you see the youtube videos of when the Fania All-Stars filled up baseball stadiums, where the people were going nuts over Celia Cruz — a Cuban woman who at that time was 55, singing and rocking 70,000 people, it’s pretty amazing to see where the music got to. Celia belonged to the whole world, but Celia was proud to be Cuban, and the people behind the music were Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans, among many other Latino nationalities.

Traditional bands in Miami

There are a couple of bands that are keeping the traditional (Cuban) music alive in Miami. Conjunto Progreso has a great following — I think it was nominated for a Latin Grammy. Conjunto Progreso is very roots-oriented, and it is comprised of great musicians.

Steve’s career and the Latin ‘scene’ in Miami

I stopped doing freelance gigs many years ago. I did a couple of club dates (casuals in New York) very early in my career and I said, “This is not why I went into music”. Never wanted music to be a job — all my choices were based on satisfying my soul and not on a commercial enterprise. Willy
Chirino’s gig was fun. He was the voice of the early Cuban exile community. I decided to go into producing other people’s music and eventually did musical advertising. In the early 1980s, the Latin scene in Miami was a lot healthier. You could hear Chirino, Los Sobrinos del Juez, Clouds, and Grupo Alma, plus some charanga bands. And you might go hear someone who did not have a record out — and wasn’t well known — with a 12-piece band, playing to a packed club! And that was just the Latin scene! It’s very tough for a freelancer to survive now in Miami.

South Beach
What became famous in the Miami area was South Beach. The music of South Beach is club music: DJ music — recorded music that occasionally uses a percussionist or saxophonist. That is what much of the world knows about music in Miami: the music of South Beach. Often times, the tourist will realize that they are not getting Latin music in South Beach, so they will travel across the bridge to check us out in Little Havana or wherever we happen to be playing.

Exiles
When you talk about Cubans in exile, you are basically talking about three or four different waves that came to the U.S. The first wave was the people that came over at the beginning, in the 1960s. Most people of that age don’t go out late at night to hear live music. The second wave was called the Mariel Wave (1980), and even the children who came over during that time are now in their 30s or 40s. The more recent wave (1990s) is comprised of people who are seeking a specific music that they like. They might like (North) American music such as hip-hop or electronic dance music.

Cuban rhythm
I think that there’s a lot of agreement on the downbeat, but if you were to look at where the eighth notes fall — that’s where the flavor is. The downbeats line up, but it’s in between the downbeats where the Cuban flavor resides. It’s the eighth notes that have the Cuban swing — it’s not static. It comes from Africa. If you listen to music from Brazil, it has that same earthiness.

About Latin culture
That’s what I love about Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians: They understand music, they understand how the instruments are played, and there’s a respect for the music history, and everyone knows and reveres the great innovators. The average fan, who is not a musician, knows a lot about their music. And if you ask most people in North America about jazz, they barely know what it is. Maybe they know Kenny G. If you’re a Cuban trumpeter, you probably know how to dance and know how to play percussion. So, when a Cuban plays the trumpet, he will play it in the way that he plays it in his culture: with his rhythmic sense. In general, I feel that we have a special response to the human voice (out of sheer survival, responding to our mom’s voice) and to percussion. That’s why I feel an endearing love for Cuban music, because so much of it is made up of voice and percussion.
Palo!

I finally started appreciating what Philbert (Palo! percussionist) does. I figured out that when I start a groove, and he starts improvising, many of the melodies he uses are probably a thousand years old! If it is going to last that long, it’s probably good! It’s the same with the percussion rhythms — they are rhythms that have lasted, and they resonate and feel right!

Dancing

African rhythms are very syncopated. The syncopation inspires the body to push to the next beat. Children in Puerto Rico, about 20 or 30 years ago, could pick up a cowbell and play a pretty decent rhythm on it!

Chirino

There is a song that Chirino wrote that has become an anthem in Cuba and in Miami. It is called Nuestro Día Ya Viene Llegando (Our Day Is Coming). It’s a song of hope that our day will come. It is a story of Chirino coming to the U.S. as a Pedro Pan child, growing up in Southwest Miami (La Sagüesera), and how difficult it was go through the whole process of being an outsider. He is singing not only to the people who have gone through this process, but to the people over there (in Cuba). I’ve heard that his music is banned in Cuba.
I met a young Cuban boy who came to Miami when he was 6 or 7, and is now 19 or 20. The story that I was told goes like this: There was a party in their house in Cuba when he was a little kid — perhaps it was New Year’s Eve — and everyone started singing this Chirino song. They were all thrown in jail that night. This was in Cuba — isn’t it great that in this country we can talk bad about our government and say anything we want? So his this little kid and his whole family were put in jail over a song that I helped produce. The dad told me that this was the day they decided to get out of Cuba. Through a very complicated ordeal, they were able to move the entire family over to the U.S. It’s amazing to think about the impact of music on both sides.

I am honored to have inherited a tiny slice of the Cuban music and to appreciate it and help glorify it a little bit in my own way. The mission has always been to just have fun, and every time it gets away from that I steer it back. I leave politics to the people who have lived it and have authority to sing about it.

Steve is still having fun in southern Florida. His group Palo! is performing, recording and keeping the Cuban sound alive. Perhaps he will create the new, 4.0 Miami sound! Not bad for a classical hornist turned into a devoted player and producer of Cuban music!

Dr. Michael Davison/Prof of Music/Jazz, Trumpet & Cuban Music
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Director, Interlochen Trumpet Institute
Edwards Instrument Performing Artist

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**CINTRÓN BAND**

By Rudy Mangual
For several decades, percussionist/bandleader Edgardo A. Cintrón has been making music inspired by his father and all the great musicians of our times. Responsible for 16 productions as a leader — eight of them with "Cintrón", his New Jersey-based band— the veteran musician is still making magic and enjoying his career. What follows is a conversation with Edgardo A. Cintrón...

Rudy Mangual: Edgardo, where is the Cintrón family originally from?
Edgardo Cintrón: My parents are originally from Yauco, Puerto Rico, but I was born in the middle of the United States—in Fort Reilly, Kansas.
RM: How did that happen?
EC: My dad was a sergeant major in the U.S. Army, retiring after 34 years. We were brought up as "army brats", all twelve of us, born in different places.

RM: How did music come into your life?
EC: My dad was also a musician (bass player) and led a band in Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, back in the 1950s. The band featured Maso Rivera, among many other excellent Puerto Rican musicians who also served in the U.S. Army.

RM: Did you serve in the military?
EC: I served two years in the Army, from 1975 to 1977.
RM: Do you have any formal music education?

EC: In middle school, I started playing the French horn because a girl I liked was in the class. Then I switched to the guitar for a while, before getting the percussion bug, which really clicked, and I truly fell in love with it. I did take some private percussion classes in my early teens for several months. In high school (Kennedy High School in New Jersey) I played in the jazz band, and at home I was playing with my dad's band (Los Tropicales) performing mainly in the Trenton, New Jersey area. That was basically my musical training, aside from listening to lots of music from all genres and styles. I remember working at New Jersey’s Great Adventure (an amusement park) one entire summer to save money to buy my first set of timbales.
RM: Do you remember what brand they were?
EC: Yes, they were LP (Latin Percussion). They slept with me. I loved those drums!

RM: Do you still play LP timbales?
EC: Yes, but I also played Toca (Sheila E) Signature series for a while, and currently I’m playing Gon Bops (Alex Acuña brass model), which deliver an amazing "cáscara" sound from their shells.

RM: When did the Cintrón Band come to be?
EC: Around 1995, I was leading a band under the name of "Tiempo 90", releasing an album called Música Caliente. We followed with a second recording titled Straight No Chaser (a Latin jazz production), which did very well at the Gabón charts and was also pre-nominated for the Latin Grammies in 1998, but soon thereafter the recording label (DBK) went out of business. I was left with another production ready to be pressed and released, and without a record label. So I called my attorney friend, Rocco Depersia, and explained my predicament. He said, "Let’s start a new band and we will call it Cintrón, and I will help you finance it." And that was the beginning of Cintrón (the band) 11 years ago. Our first official gig was performing in D.C. at President Bush’s Inaugural Celebration.
RM: Was Cintrón (the band) always based in New Jersey?
EC: Yes, most of the players were from New Jersey, with a few actually residing in Pennsylvania and Delaware.

RM: What was Rocco Depersia's role in the band?
EC: Rocco was a vocalist in the band and my business partner. He actually retired from the band about a year ago after a ten-year run with Cintrón. In the early days of Cintrón, we had as many as five vocalists, three singing leads and two singing background and chorus. In recent years, we have cut the band to a maximum of three vocalists, and four horns (instead of five).

RM: How would you describe the sound of the early Cintrón Band?
EC: We did a lot of Latin soul and salsa with bilingual lyrics. For example, we would make medleys of R&B hit songs arranged to salsa and Latin jazz styles. Took many oldies but goodies like Lonely Boy and Latinized them. You have to understand that we were catering to mixed audiences of African Americans, Anglos and Latinos; not playing in New York City's "cuchifrito circuit" (local salsa circuit). Our version of the classic hit song Suavecito earned us a letter from the group Malo, praising our work and thanking us for doing right by their song.

RM: When did Cintrón start to evolve into a Latin band?
EC: We have always been more of a Latin band than anything else, because regardless of playing R&B scores, oldies or top forty hits, we always add our Latin flavor and swing to just about
everything we do. By our second album (*Hitmen*), I started including more salsa tracks in the repertoire, such as *El Paso de Encarnación.* In every album thereafter, we continued including more and more salsa tracks. Then, after Rocco left the band, I really started bringing in old-school salsa dura into the band. Currently our sets are 80% salsa and Latin jazz, with a ballad or a pop/oldie in between, depending on the audience.

**RM:** Tell us about your most recent release, *Manteca?*

**EC:** This is something we did a couple of years ago at The Mohegan Sun Hotel and Casino in Connecticut. It captured the band in one of our best performances. After listening to it a couple of times, we decided to release it as a live album. We opened the performance with the Dizzy Gillespie/Chano Chozo classic *Manteca,* hence Cintrón Band Live: *Manteca* is the title of the CD. A total of 12 tracks showcase the Latin big band sound of Cintrón and the versatility of Latin music, from our version of the Eddie Palmieri classic *Vámonos Pa’l Monte* to Tito Puente’s *Picadillo* to Take The ‘A’ Train and Cherry Pink Apple Blossom White. The CD also has a bonus track, *Human Nature* (the Michael Jackson mega-hit), which we recorded in the studio last year, arranged to a salsa beat. Featured on lead Spanish vocals is Raúl Vigueroa, with background vocals by Lia Montalvo and Eddie García. Also featured on lead guitar is Roosevelt Walker, Jr. The CD was co-produced by Cintrón Beverages.
RM: Is there a company called Cintrón Beverages?
EC: It produces an energy drink called "Cintrón," currently available in 40 states of the U.S. and in nine other countries. Cintrón Beverages is owned by Wes Wyatt, who helped produce our first album for Universal Records years ago and has always been a good friend to Rocco Depersia and I. In order to help us promote the band, Mr. Wyatt used my last name on his race boat initially, which led to the creation of the energy drink called Cintrón. The drink has become an instant success, surpassing all expectations from its makers. The beverage is available in about a dozen flavors, using organic cane sugar and also offering an alternative, sugar-free product, as well as a liquid energy shot-drink. Since the drink bares my name, I own a percentage of the company. So what’s happening now is that the Cintrón Band is helping to promote the Cintrón drink, while the beverage company helps the band. Last week, we performed in Detroit, Michigan, at the Motor City Casino in a promotion for Cintrón (the drink), while Cintrón Beverage Group is hosting and producing our new record release party this month.

RM: What's next for Cintrón Band?
EC: With these promotions for Cintrón (the drink), I’m planning to incorporate Latin dancers with the band to present a complete Latin music and dance show to our audiences. We are also working on our next studio recording and planning a Latin Motown tribute recording for next year.

RM: What advice would you give to young musicians?
EC: Follow the best in whatever genre or style of music you prefer and always stay open-minded to all types of music. As a musician, my main goal is to attract kids and youngsters to music. It keeps them off the streets and utilizes their minds in a productive and positive way. Making music
makes you feel well about yourself.

CARLOS VARELA: DOCUMENTANDO LA REALIDAD DE LA LLAVE DEL GOLFO

Por Luis Tamargo
Nacido en la "Ciudad de las Columnas" en la primavera del 1963, el cantautor Carlos Varela se autodefine como "habanero de corazón". A través de la mayor parte de su trayectoria artística, Varela ha demostrado que carece de pelos en la lengua, tal como se puede apreciar en sus composiciones más polémicas y censuradas ("Guillermo Tell", "Tropi-Collage", "Círculo de Tiza", "Ahora que los Mapas están Cambiando de Color", etc.). La siguiente entrevista fue realizada con motivo de su próxima presentación en el Playboy Jazz Festival (11, 12 de junio, 2011), al frente de una agrupación extraordinaria que incluye a Tony Rodríguez (piano), Julio César (bajo), David Suárez (bacteria) y Diana Fuentes (coro)…

Luis Tamargo: Tengo entendido que comenzaste a manifestar tus inquietudes musicales como percusionista a la edad de 8 años, construyendo una especie de drumset con cajas y latas de galletas que tocabas en el balcón del apartamento de tu familia en El Vedado. ¿También tocabas durante los "apagones"?

Carlos Varela: Justamente los apagones de principio de los años 1970s eran el mejor pretexto para pasar el tiempo tocando canciones desde el balcón de mi edificio. Además de gustarme la percusión, yo sentía que tenía facilidades de oído para organizar aquella pequeña banda con dos guitarras, latas y cajas y hacer sonar aquello. Así que era como una especie de director musical; es por eso que cuando los chamacos del barrio me vieron construir mi "primera batería", todos estábamos casi seguros que mi destino era ser músico.

LT: Durante tu adolescencia, figuraste como baterista en ciertos efímeros grupos roqueros que tocaban temas de los Beatles, Peter Frampton y Paul Simon, imitando la fonética inglesa sin ningún entendimiento de sus letras. ¿Fue durante esa etapa de "roquero ingenuo" que se inició tus interés en la guitarra? ¿Y es cierto que empezaste tocando "de oído" guitarras prestadas?

CV: Así fue. Fueron tiempos de tocar "covers" en las fiestas de la escuela, que además era una buena manera de ligar chicas. Gracias a las guitarras prestadas y a la paciencia de algunos amigos que ya tocaban, comencé a aprender los primeros acordes y a descubrir la pasión que creaba en mí ese instrumento. Inmediatamente comencé a "inventar acordes" y a "sacar de oído" muchas canciones. Recuerdo que hasta me aprendí el primer y segundo movimiento del Concierto de Aranjuez, lo cual era realmente muy divertido. Me pasaba prácticamente el día entero con la guitarra. En esos años en mi barrio, las fiestas eran con grupos o "combos", tocando rock and roll "en vivo" en las casas. Eran los años del movimiento hippie en la Habana y eso marcó mi adolescencia.

LT: Tal parece que tú perteneces a una generación de músicos que surgieron en los años 80 y que creció escuchando al rock 'n' roll, pero también poseía la capacidad de incorporar elementos de jazz y blues sin abandonar su intrínseca cubanía, inclusive si no utilizaba excesivamente el timbre característico de la percusión cubana.

CV: Es cierto, mi generación creció oyendo emisoras del Norte con unas antenas caseras que inventábamos para poder escuchar los Hit Parades de aquellos tiempos. Gracias a esas...
emisoras, los jóvenes conocían lo que sucedía del otro lado del charco e incluso muchos aprendieron a hablar inglés. Escuchar rock and roll todo el día, más la gran influencia que los iniciadores de la Nueva Trova Cubana como Silvio Rodríguez y Pablo Milanés ejercieron sobre todos nosotros, nos convirtieron en un grupo de compositores que comenzamos a mezclar todos esos géneros y esas influencias y a buscar un sonido y un estilo poético propio, quizás más urbano y más contemporáneo, sin abusar demasiado de la típica y clásica percusión cubana. La música cubana es muy rica y amplia y eso es una bendición.

LT: ¿Cuándo fue que comenzaste a conectarte con eso que llamaban “el movimiento de la nueva trova”? Recuerdo que el musicólogo Cristobal Díaz Ayala cuestionó la integridad de la “nueva trova” de aquellos tiempos al señalar que podía compararse al “canto gregoriano de la Edad Media, también sometido a una entrega completa a otro principio, en este caso religioso”¿. ¿Qué te parece tal comparación?

CV: En el año 1980 ingresé en lo que aquellos años se conocía como el Movimiento de la Nueva Trova. Guardo bonitos recuerdos porque eran años donde te la pasabas tocando en festivales, fábricas, escuelas, etc. y eso te da un fogueo y una experiencia que te ayuda a crecer como artista. Respecto la opinión de Cristóbal Díaz, pero en todo caso es sólo su criterio. Yo creo que en esencia, los que crearon el Movimiento de la Nueva Trova, todos músicos y compositores de gran talento, se dieron cuenta que podían crear una escuela dentro de la canción cubana que se alejara del mal gusto, lo banal, lo superficial que ya existía y desgraciadamente existe aún en las radios de todas partes del mundo. Con el tiempo ese movimiento lo quisieron masificar y perdió prestigio porque ya no era un movimiento donde sólo encontrabas talento y esto hizo que tarde o temprano desapareciera, pero su legado está ahí. Desde entonces han surgido varias generaciones de trovadores con diferentes estilos que le agradecen a Silvio, Pablo, Noel y Vicente, haber despertado esa semillita de contar y cantar tu realidad con canciones.

LT: Cuentan que tus primeras canciones, a principio de los 80, se parecían mucho a las canciones de Silvio Rodríguez y Pablo Milanés, pero luego comprendiste que tus canciones tenían que parecerse más ti, a la vida cotidiana de tu generación. ¿Cuándo fue que cambiaste de palo pa’ rumba?

CV: Creo que nos sucedió a todos los de mi generación porque Silvio y Pablo fueron una gran influencia para todos. Todos queríamos escribir como ellos, todos estábamos cautivados con el alcance de su música y el vuelo de su poesía. A Silvio lo conocí personalmente en el ’84 y fue la primera vez que le canté un par de canciones, entonces me invitó a la pizzería de 23 y 12 en el Vedado y estuvimos hablando toda esa noche. Ahí fue cuando me dijo: “gracias por decir que soy una influencia para ti, pero trata de que tus canciones se parezcan a tu historia, a tu barrio, a tus amigos, etc.”, y fue una lección que aprendí muy bien. Desde entonces comencé a escribir canciones sin parar con un sentido más urbano, más social, de lo que sentía que pasaba a mí alrededor. Yo además estudiaba teatro en el Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) y eso también fue una gran influencia a la hora de decidir cómo contar las historias, es decir, la teatralidad dentro de cada una de estas canciones fue lo que contribuyó a elaborar un estilo propio.
LT: Leí en una publicación cubana (“Clave”, abril-junio '89) que tus primeras guitarras te fueron obsequiadas por Silvio Rodríguez y Amaury Pérez, en 1986 y 1988, respectivamente. ¿Esto implica alguna carga afectiva o simbólica? ¿Y qué nos puedes contar sobre la famosa antena de Amaury Pérez?

CV: Para mí las guitarras son como talismanes. La primera me la regaló Santiago Feliú, luego Amaury y Silvio me regalaron guitarras, también Joaquín Sabina, Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt. Todas son muy especiales para mí. No sólo porque me gustan mucho las guitarras sino porque han sido regalos de amigos y artistas que admiro y respeto mucho. Una guitarra es el mejor regalo que me puedes hacer. Cada una tiene un mundo y un sonido propio y eso es algo que inspira. Además, cuando un colega de este oficio le da una guitarra a otro es como si el padre de Guillermo Tell le regalara una ballesta a su hijo. Yo lo veo así.

LT: Tú primera agrupación se denominó, allá por el 1987, “Señal en el Asfalto”, el cual es también el título de uno de tus temas originales. ¿Qué implicaba dicho título en aquel entonces?

CV: Esos eran los años donde yo estaba más conectado con la ciudad como fuente de inspiración, era mi manera de asumir y aceptar mi entorno como habanero. En ese tiempo puedes encontrar frases y elementos urbanos en mis canciones como el asfalto, la gasolina, la acera, los charcos, los árboles, etc. El hecho de ponerle un título a mi banda era mi obsesión por no estar solo en el escenario y por darle un sentido más teatral a nuestro show. Siempre soné y quise formar parte de una banda. Me gusta que la banda de músicos que me acompañan tenga su propia personalidad, además de acompañarme a mí. A lo mejor fue una influencia de Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band o Tom Petty con sus Heartbreakers. Luego con los años y las circunstancias a veces tienes que cambiar un músico o toda la banda. La mayoría de los músicos de la banda que tenía cuando grabé “Como los Peces” en 1994 en Madrid decidieron no regresar más a Cuba. Esas cosas pasan, pero gracias a Dios, este es un país que no para de producir buenos músicos.

LT: En 1989, cuando estrenaste tu canción “Guillermo Tell” en un teatro habanero, ¿Te imaginaste las trascendencia que iba a tener? ¿Es cierto que otras canciones tuyas no obtuvieron difusión radial debido a su presunto “pesimismo” y carencia de carácter “constructivo” durante el llamado “período especial”?

CV: Ese concierto fue en el Cine Chaplin en abril del año 1989. Canté todas las canciones que luego formaron parte del disco Jalisco Park y muchas otras. Recuerdo que Guillermo Tell la compuse ese mismo día, es decir que no estaba en el programa inicial. Esa tarde cuando llegué a la prueba de sonido se la canté a los músicos y amigos y me miraron con asombro. No me podía imaginar lo que sucedería esa noche. Eran años muy complicados para mí. Volví a cantar en la Habana después de estar un tiempo censurado. Recuerdo a muchos amigos esa noche que ya no están en Cuba. También recuerdo a Silvio que me dijo sobre Guillermo Tell: “esa canción va a trascender por los tiempos de los tiempos”. Todavía escucho la grabación de ese concierto y me emociono. Después de esa noche pasé a cantar al teatro Karl Marx, el más grande de Cuba, con
5 mil lunetas. Las canciones que no han tenido mucha difusión en aquellos años se debía muchas veces a un mecanismo de autocensura de algunos viejos productores de radio y TV. Con la llegada de una nueva generación a los medios eso ha ido cambiando, aunque todavía hay canciones que no pasan, igual sucedió con Silvio al principio, así que nada de eso me quita el sueño. Siempre van a existir los "delimitadores de las primaveras".

**LT:** A propósito del "periodo especial", creo que fue en 1990 que grabaste "Ahora que los mapas están cambiando de color", cuya letra elocuente reflejó los cambios derivados de la desintegración del bloque soviético ¿Cómo fue interpretada la caída del Muro de Berlín en la Llave del Golfo?

**CV:** Los finales de los 1980s y principio de los '90s fueron años muy complicados. El mundo dejó de ser como nos lo habían enseñado en la escuela, con aquellos mapas políticos donde los países socialistas tenían un color diferente al de los capitalistas. Nadie podía imaginar que se iba a derramar la paleta de colores, parecía imposible. La perestroika, el glasnost y otros movimientos despertaban mucha paranoia sobre el futuro de Cuba. Las nuevas películas, revistas y documentales rusos o de los antiguos países socialistas causaban furor ó pánico en la Habana. Sabíamos el momento de la historia que estábamos viviendo y había muchas expectativas y anhelos. Traté de cantarle a ese sentimiento. Es por eso que esa canción tiene un verso profético que dice: "Cementerio chino, creo que esta vez veo tu destino y se abrirán tus viejas puertas de una vez".

**LT:** Muchas de tus canciones funcionan como crónicas fidedignas que aluden a la libertad, a la dolorosa división familiar, a las víctimas de la fuga marítima. ¿Acaso eres una especie de historiador de la realidad cotidiana en la "Isla de Corcho"? ¿Crees que tus textos han creado un espacio para la polémica que funciona como una forma de "vitamina espiritual" para las nuevas generaciones cubanas?

**CV:** No creo ser un historiador o un cronista, esa no es mi intención. Sólo que me ha pasado contando historias de mi realidad en los últimos 25 años y temas como el de la división familiar le tocan de cerca a cualquier familia cubana, dentro y fuera de Cuba. Lo mismo sucede con los miles de cubanos que se han perdido en el mar. Me gustan las canciones que crean un espacio para el pensamiento y la polémica si están escritas con belleza poética y musical. Las canciones que te sacuden el cuerpo y el alma, y despiertan sentimientos y pensamientos que te comprometen con tu realidad se convierten en vitaminas espirituales para la gente. Yo crecí escuchando ese tipo de canciones.

**LT:** ¿Qué puedes contarnos sobre tu más reciente producción discográfica? ¿Y con motivo de tu próxima visita a California (donde te presentarás en el Payboy Jazz Festival), piensas volver a reunirte con nuestro mutuo ecobio, Luis Conte?

**CV:** No Es El Fin es mi disco más reciente. Lo grabamos en mi estudio y para mí es mi disco más musical. Con los años descubrí que la música dice tanto como las palabras. Aunque en esencia siempre me señalan por mis letras, lo
cierto es que también soy músico y quería reflejar eso en estos 12 temas. El proceso de grabación también lo hicimos de una manera diferente a todos mis discos anteriores. Fue una idea de mi manager Carlos Iglesias —nos encerramos con mi banda durante 2 meses y fuimos libres de jugar con los arreglos de cada tema. Hicimos varias versiones; fue como un taller muy divertido. Creo que en los discos se graba la energía de los que te rodean. El aporte de Tony Rodríguez al piano y del ingeniero Fito Martínez en el sonido terminaron de darle un toque especial donde se nota la influencia del rock, el jazz y la fusión. Al mismo tiempo es un disco muy teatral. Es un viaje desde el primer corte hasta el tema 12. Soy de los que todavía cree en la dramaturgia de los discos.

Luis Conte, como Jackson Browne o Bonnie Raitt, ya forman parte de mi vida y de mi familia. Es un enorme privilegio tenerlos como amigos, y además que se suban con uno a algunos escenarios en esta gira.

NARAS’ Decision to Eliminate the Latin Jazz Category from the Grammy Awards

Photos ©Allen Spatz

On April 6, 2011, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) announced the restructuring of categories across all genres, reducing from 109 to 78 the total number of categories to be recognized at the 54th Grammy Awards in 2012. NARAS explains that this action has been taken as an effort to continuously evolve its Grammy Awards process. The Recording Academy was established in 1957 by a group of musicians, producers, engineers and recording professionals dedicated to improving the cultural condition and quality of life for music and its makers.

Among the categories to be cut are contemporary jazz, instrumental rock, world music, Mexican and classical categories, and Latin jazz. How do these cuts translate to the successful evolution of the Grammy process? In the case of Latin jazz: Are we being penalized for having our own Latin Grammy Awards since 1995? I have personally felt, since 1995, that such separate Latin Grammy Awards segregated Latin music from the mainstream arena, as they do not carry the same weight or prestige as their big brothers (the real Grammy Awards) in the true scope of our new world village.

Jelly Roll Morton, a seminal figure in the birth and development of jazz, recognized the presence and flavor of Latin rhythms and forms in the early fabric of this original American musical art form. As early as the late 1920s, big bands formed in the Caribbean islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico performed jazz compositions, along with their own repertoires of Caribbean and Latin American scores, to the delight of thousands from all over the world. These musical lovers would eventually be wed in holy musical matrimony by Machito in the 1940s as "Afro Cuban jazz". Machito and his
Afro Cubans, Dizzy Gillespie, Cal Tjader, Tito Puente, Mongo Santamaría and Ray Barretto are some of the early pioneers of this music. Musicians such as Irakere, Paquito D’Rivera, Arturo Sandoval, Descarga Boricua, Michel Camilo, Eddie Palmieri, The Fort Apache Band, Bobby Sanabria, and John Santos, among many others, have subsequently kept Latin jazz evolving and alive throughout the world.

For more than 20 years, as publisher of Latin Beat Magazine, I have witnessed firsthand the evolution of this musical genre and the love and passion that it delivers to millions of fans and aficionados from all corners of the planet.

Rudy Mangual, editor/publisher, Latin Beat Magazine.

I was at the special NY Chapter NARAS meeting on April 11, 2011 with Eddie Palmieri, Larry Harlow, Brian Lynch, Chris Washburne, José Claussell, Randy Klein, Bob Sancho, Joechem Becker, etc., and we all protested in FULL FORCE with impassioned speeches. Others present were Chembo Corniel, Hector Martignon, Brenda Feliciano, Alvie Alvarado (who videotaped everything), Annette Aguilar, and many others. This is NOT ONLY about the Latin jazz category. It’s so important that Grammy CEO Neil Portnow flew in from L.A. and was present. It’s about full out cultural insensitivity by NARAS.

First, they wouldn’t let me, Eddie, or any of us — not even reporters from the New York Times, New York Daily News, or The Wall Street Journal — in because they said that we had not responded to the RSVP invite. They said we had to wait and that MAYBE we could get in. The only notice we got about the meeting was an e-mail saying that it was an open meeting for EVERYONE (including non-Grammy members), and there was no RSVP attached. Bob Sancho showed them the print out. Luckily, Brenda Feliciano (Paquito D’Rivera’s wife) had a friend on the Board who walked in; that person told them, “Let these people in, they’re NARAS members.” Mind you — Eddie and Larry were former Board of Governor Members at NARAS. Eddie is an 8-time winner, Larry is a 3-time nominee, and Larry was also responsible for getting the Salsa/Tropical music category established in the Grammys. Larry finally left in disgust stating that "...this used to be a high class organization."

CEO Neil Portnow was there and he introduced a gentleman that is responsible for the categories and the restructuring. This gentleman opened the proceedings by explaining how to enter and how voting happens in the Grammys — something we all knew already know as NARAS members. Then it was time for the Q&A. There were two opening questions by Grammy members addressing
the Blues and Hip Hop categories. After that, it was question after question regarding the Latin jazz category.

They stated that anything less than 48 entries would have only 3 nominations in the category. They stated that Latin jazz over the last 5 year has only had about 30 entries each year. 30 entries are more than enough. The limit used to be 25! They also cut contemporary jazz, rock instrumental, Mexican categories, World music, Classical, etc. Are these not representative of the diversity of the American musical landscape? Latin jazz is uniquely American! It was born in NYC with Machito and the Afro-Cubans, continued by Dizzy, Puente, etc. Besides that, we have more Latinos in this country now than ever before! Chris Washburne made the point that it seems NARAS is now run by the Tea Party.

Joechem Becker from ZOHO records made the point that this seems to be a backlash from all of the indie labels being nominated and winning at the Grammys last year; it was the highest number of indie wins ever. The majors don’t want that competition, particularly after Justin Beiber lost to Esperanza Spalding. Did you read the full-page ad that Steve Stout (former record company exec) took out in the New York Times the day after the Grammys? He blasted the Grammys for Esperanza’s win and claimed that they have lost touch with popular culture. Someone had to pay for that $50,000 to $80,000 full-page ad and it wasn't him. Last week he said the elimination of all these categories was a step in the right direction!

As Eddie Palmieri so succinctly stated Monday night, who cares that a category only has 25 entries? This is more than enough to justify a category. Even it had only 10 entries it would be justified. Now they want to cut things down to 3 nominees in a category if it has less than 48 entries. Who thought this number up? They say they have experts on Latin Jazz in the committees. Any expert would have told them that the category must remain separate, as should the contemporary jazz category. THEY ARE THREE DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT STYLES OF MUSIC!!!!

Latin Jazz as a genre will never get recognition now the way things stand. Now a CD by Pat Metheny (contemporary jazz) has to compete against Nicholas Peyton (straight ahead/trad jazz) and a Bobby Sanabria CD (Latin Jazz). That puts three absolutely different genres competing in one category. It’s one of the many reasons that we in the field are reacting as if it is a slap in the face to our culture and the music we produce ... IT IS!
We all stated how completely wrong this is and how they have to change this extremely poor decision. I’ve already gone over the culturally insensitive, economic, and covert reasons they did this. Eddie made an important statement by saying that there has never been a Latin group or a jazz group featured on the telecast. I told them that I thought the Grammys were about diversity, not exclusivity. The Grammys was the last place where marginalized music and artists could finally get the respect they deserve. It was about celebrating great art. They are sending out the wrong message and that message is that they don’t care about cultural diversity!!! I also stated that I felt like a fool because for years I’ve been preaching to my fellow Latinos to join NARAS. Now they just laugh and say, “vistes!”

I mentioned how I had just returned from Eau Claire, Wisconsin playing at the Jazz Festival there. Over 108 middle, high school, and college bands competed and performed. THEY ALL PLAYED AS PART OF THEIR PROGRAMS SOME AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ!!! This music has spread to the educational system, is part of America's history, has a rich tradition that is respected worldwide, is keeping jazz alive and they cut the category.

Others followed and made intelligent, impassioned pleas. One thing is for sure, the NYC Chapter governors, as well as CEO Portnow were embarrassed and impressed at the veracity of the arguments made. Chris Washburne told me afterwards that a gentleman made a statement that it was embarrassing that a gentleman of Mr. Palmieri’s stature, someone who helped to define this genre and fought to get the category established, had to come down to this meeting to beg that the category be re-instated.

This NYC Chapter meeting is the first in a 13-city tour by CEO Portnow in an attempt to explain this incredibly wrong decision by NARAS. I implore all of you who live in these chapter cities to show up in mass. It is again not just about the Latin jazz category; it is about all of the categories that were cut. And you don't have to be a Grammy member to show up and voice your opinion. Make sure you write to CEO Neil Portnow at neil@grammy.com and make your voice heard. THIS IS A NATIONAL ISSUE NOT JUST A MUSIC, GRAMMY ISSUE. I believe the next city they are going to try to explain this debacle is San Francisco, a virtual hotbed of multi-cultural activity. Let
local and National media know. I made three phone calls, and as a result, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and The New York Daily News were there. It was as simple as that. They already are starting to be aware.

Neil Portnow’s e-mail is neil@grammy.com

Aché, Bobby Sanabria

Emails sent to Latin Beat Magazine:

NARAS which is the governing organization for the Grammy's has announced today that they have eliminated the Latin Jazz category. Over the years, I have had thoughts that NARAS wouldn’t recognize a musical note if it hit them in their face. I have, up until now, given NARAS the benefit of the doubt, but, now they have proved to me and the rest of the global musical world that they don’t know what music is or where it comes from. Latin Jazz is a genre deeply rooted in the history of Jazz and our country. Eliminating it is like telling Tito Puente and Dizzy Gillespie that their musical contributions were worth zilch or less. Excuse me, NARAS, but it is due to your lack of knowledge of music that has caused the music business to be in the shape it is today.

Please stop telling us that NARAS is giving back by conducting music education programs for the youth of America. What could NARAS possibly be teaching? For sure, it isn’t Latin Jazz. This is simply insulting to our intelligence and worse it is a prevarication. Eliminating Latin Jazz from the Grammys proves that you, NARAS, are the cause of the demise.

Randy Klein, President Jazzheads-A NEW YORK CITY BASED MUSIC LABEL.

While I would agree with eliminating the gender-based categories, I also find it ill- advised and extremely short-sighted to relegate World Music to one sole category, and downright insulting to eliminate the Latin Jazz category. Who makes these decisions? How does this serve the field?

John Santos

Five-time Grammy nominee in various categories including Latin Jazz and Traditional World that are both now eliminated.

Why are we not responding to NARAS with some kind of petition and group statement. We certainly need everyone’s support in this matter. Latin Jazz is over 70 years old, if you start counting from when Mario Bauza created the Machito & his Afro Cubans Orchestra; older still, if you start counting from when Juan Tizol created CARAVAN. Please let’s get organized and send our efforts to Neil Portnow at NARAS.

We should send our efforts out on Facebook, Twitter, and we should send press releases as well.
All of us, artists, radio hosts and programmers, journalists, labels, arrangers, composers, fans, todo el mundo. This is the most important issue we have ever addressed and so far there have been few responses and no calls for action. Whatever we think about NARAS, this decision just marginalizes, denigrates, and denies our music. How do you think this decision will affect the shrinking radio play we are already seeing?

Let's get started. This is a direct attack on our music, and in many cases, our livelihood. This is NOT a time to be passive. Can we get started? I propose the most eloquent among us (John S., Bobby S., Gary E., and everyone else) contribute. We will need the vocal support of past Latin Jazz Grammy winners Eddie, Poncho, Chucho, and all of our well known players, writers, programmers, and more.

STAND UP NOW. I suggest that we send a message something like the following to: joannac@grammy.com (executive officer at NARAS) and neil@grammy.com (Neil Portnow, director of NARAS):

This decision marginalizes, denigrates and denies our music. How do you think this decision will affect the shrinking radio play we are already seeing? Latin Jazz is a music born in the USA, a true American art form, with an almost 70-year history of valued contributions. Mario Bauza, Machito, Dizzy Gillespie, Chico O'Farrill, Paquito D'Rivera, Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, Cal Tjader, Charlie Parker, Billy Taylor, Mongo Santamaria, Herbie Mann, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Kenny Dorham, Art Blakey, Sonny Stitt, Sonny Rollins, Chucho Valdes, Jerry Gonzalez, Gato Barbieri, and so many others have given us so much true art in the name of Latin jazz.

I agree entirely with the statements made by my colleague Mr. Bobby Sanabria.

Bobby Matos

I am appalled at the decision to eliminate this category, but I must also say that I am not surprised. This decision makes absolutely no sense, and it only proves what I have suspected since the early seventies, that the folks in charge at NARAS don't know squat about music. Not just Latin American Music, but music period. I urge all who are within the sound of my voice or who receive this notice, to please add your comments and make your voices heard, loud and clear, as this is the only way to grab the attention of those folks at the top of this organization. They say that there is strength in numbers, so let's show them that we are more than just a handful of aficionados who stubbornly cling to our roots. Our music can be a mainstream music, it is that good!

Chico Alvarez Peraza, musician, bandleader, radio host and journalist
Concierto en el Estadio de la Universidad de San Marcos Fania All-Stars tocó por primera vez en Perú

Por Martin Gómez
Fotos @Arturo Guerra
El concierto de Fania All-Stars en Perú ha sido catalogado como un evento histórico. Era la primera vez que colectivo 'todos estrellas' más famoso de la salsa se presentaba en Lima y la expectativa, como era de esperarse, fue enorme. El amplio Estadio de la Universidad de San Marcos se colmó con no menos de 20 mil personas. Su ubicación estratégica, entre Lima y el puerto del Callao, fue clave para recibir a la muchedumbre salsera que esperó por cuarenta años para contemplar, en carne y hueso, al maestro Johnny Pacheco y a cada uno de los integrantes de las Fania All-Stars, incluyendo al sonero Ismael Quintana, quien se decía que estaba muy delicado de salud, pero que al final también formó parte de la delegación estelar.

A las 8 de la noche de aquel 19 de marzo, el ajetreo en los alrededores del Estadio de la Universidad de San Marcos era inusual para un concierto de salsa. Hasta nos hizo recordar aquel laberinto humano que se formaba en los años 80 con motivo de los conciertos de salsa en la antigua Feria del Hogar, recinto donde cantaron Héctor Lavoe, Cheo Feliciano, Rubén Blades y tantas otras estrellas de la música latina. Resultó inevitable recordar nostálgicamente aquellos tiempos al contemplar en San Marcos a familias enteras luciendo camisetas de la antigua casa disquiera de Massucci, mientras numerosos visitantes extranjeros (argentinos, colombianos, chilenos y ecuatorianos) se mezclaban con los nativos del país. Es decir, se contaba con todos...
los ingredientes para una noche maravillosa. Y vaya que lo fue.
El concierto comenzó con la Orquesta de La Gente, banda liderada por Gilberto "El Pulpo" Colón (hijo). Con su sonido impecable, la agrupación del Pulpo hizo un merecido homenaje a Héctor Lavoe en la voz de Ray Bayona. A medida que interpretaban cada tema, el público se enardecía y aplaudía entusiastamente. Eddie Montalvo se paseó varias veces cerca de la tarima, como quien pedía una oportunidad para tocar, para sumarse a este grupo que a él le resulta más que familiar. No se pudo. Al pie de la tarima, Reynaldo Jorge se puso a filmar a La Gente. Sin duda, el mar de emociones no solo golpeaba al público sino también a los músicos. Después de "Bandolera" y un sobrecogedor solo de piano del Pulpo, terminó la primera etapa del espectáculo. Ahora venía el turno de los mayores, los padres de esta movida sociocultural que por décadas nos ha mantenido embelesados, los culpables de que existan investigadores, melómanos, bailadores, y toda esta fauna de seres que disfrutan con el más irreverente de los estilos musicales: la salsa.
Navarro entró en escena y empezó a nombrar a cada uno de los integrantes. En las pantallas gigantes el impacto audiovisual desempeña un papel aparte. Las tribunas del estadio se aprietan de algarabía y en la zona preferencial del auditorio la gente no puede creer lo que está viendo. Fania All-Stars está a punto de tocar. Bobby Valentín, Eddie Montalvo, Nicki Marrero (vestido de danzante de tijeras, un atuendo ancestral de Perú), Roberto Roena, Papo Lucca, Larry Harlow, Reynaldo Jorge, Alfredo de La Fé, Lewis Khan, Héctor "Bomberito" Zarzuela, Ismael Miranda, Adalberto Santiago, Ismael Quintana y Cheo Feliciano. Todos bajo la batuta de Johnny Pacheco. El sueño se ha cumplido y la "Descarga Fania" provoca el delirio de una fanaticada que aplaude, que grita, que llora, que recuerda y que se abraza en sentimientos que sólo los salseros podemos entender.
Enseguida Adalberto Santiago nos entregará "Quitate la máscara" y "Dinamita". Lució mejor que en una visita anterior a Lima, cuando la voz no estuvo necesariamente a la altura debida. Luego Ismael Quintana con "Mi debilidad" y un esfuerzo sobrehumano por complacernos. Y lo logró. Su remate con "Adoración" fue de antología. "La experiencia en el sonido no se pierde nunca", parecía decirnos en la distancia. Ismael Miranda nos trajo de vuelta a "María Luisa" y nos recordó que Borrinqueñ tiene montuno. Luego subió Cheo Feliciano y, con su voz aterciopelada y timbre sonoro, nos regaló "Los Entierros", "Anacaona" y "El Ratón". Parecía que, efectivamente, llegábamos al final cuando de pronto suben las bestias, Richie Ray y Bobby Cruz, quienes nos ofrecieron varios temas memorables: "Ahora vengo yo", "Jala jala" y "El sonido bestial". El público se alborotó cuando Alfredo de la Fé interpretó "La Flor de la Canela", preludio ideal para escuchar a "Quitate tú" un tributo póstumo a Héctor Lavoe "Ponte duro", el último tema de la noche, motiva a Roberto Roena a salir a bailar con una chica y me hace llegar a la siguiente conclusión: Podré pasarme años buscando un adjetivo exacto para lo que experimentamos esa magnífica noche, pero nunca lo encontraré. Buen repertorio, inmensa entrega de músicos y cantantes, y un público que permaneció conectado.
Hace unos días tuve la suerte de conversar con Doña Cuqui Pacheco, la cual declaró emotivamente: "Estamos locos por volver". Ojalá así sea. Lima bailó y gozó. Los gigantes de la Fania All-Stars le devolvieron la vida a miles de sus fanáticos de Perú, quizá una de las últimas plazas salseras que aún no habían visitado. Lo lindo de todo esto es que estamos vivos para contarlo.

The 13th Annual Festival Latino

Text and Photos by Ricky Richardson

UCLA's Latin American Student Association (LASA) presented its 13th annual Festival Latino on Saturday, April 16, 2011, at Wilson Plaza. Festival Latino provides art, fun and education to the entire community. This year’s theme was "United Beyond Borders/Unidos, Traspassando Fronteras."
The Wilson Plaza stage was the place where renowned dance groups, performers, and spoken word artists showcased their talents. Each performance illuminated an often-overlooked musical aspect of the performers’ particular country of origin, thus highlighting the wonderful cultural diversity of Latin America.
Numerous groups entertained the heterogeneous crowd that gathered on a hot afternoon at Wilson Plaza. The scheduled performers included Kimera, Banda Villa de Jerez, LASA’s Salsa Troupe, TAZ, Lala Romero, LASA’s Latin Styles Dance Troupe, Folklórico de UCLA, Samba at Saticoy, Lobos del Bravo, Yari Moré y su Orquesta, and SOLemar.