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Reviews

PICK OF THE MONTH

PAUL DE CASTRO Y SU ORQUESTA DENGUE
Bueno Pá Gozar
 (Kipu Records)

Los Angeles-based bandleader/pianist Paul De Castro displays his multiple talents as composer and arranger in this new production titled *Bueno Pá Gozar*. In the company of his band Orquesta Dengue and guest participation of some of the top-notch Latin players from Southern California – Justo Almarino, Danilo Lozano, Sal Cracchiolo, Ramon Flores, Kevin Ricard and Rigoberto Lopez – De Castro takes us on a musical journey full of surprising sounds and colors within the boundaries of Latin jazz and Afro-Cuban music. Co-producing the recording with De Castro is recording and mixing engineer Tony Shogren, whose trap drumming talents add a modern groove throughout the production. Iris Sandra Cepeda, Nicholas Roman and Gonzalo Chomat bring their vocal talents to the mix, adding yet another delightful element to this recording. Favorite tracks include the title track *Bueno Pá Gozar*, *Chico*, and *Azulejos*. - Rudy Mangual



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REVIEWS

MARK LEVINE & THE LATIN TINGE
OFF AND ON - THE MUSIC OF MOACIR SANTOS
 (Left Coast Clave)

Nacido en New Hampshire, criado en Florida y egresado de la Universidad de Boston, el polifacético pianista Mark Levine se estableció en Los Angeles a finales de los años 60, cuando el joven "bebopero" tuvo la buena fortuna de conocer al legendario Moacir Santos (1926-2006), con quien luego colaboraría en la grabación del formidable LP *Saudade* (Blue Note, 1974). Levine recuerda acertadamente que no se trataba de "jazz brasileño", sino de música brasileña ejecutada por músicos de jazz. Debo agregar que Levine – radicado en San Francisco a partir de 1974 – decidió fundar (a finales de los 1990) el magistral cuarteto denominado "The Latin Tinge", con el propósito de elevar la síntesis del post-bop y los ritmos cubanos a un nivel inesperadamente fascinante.



Tales antecedentes justifican el carácter panamericano de la cuarta grabación de Levine y su rítmicamente deslumbrante "Latin Tinge". Con la excepción de "Nana" (la composición más conocida de Santos, adaptada aquí al ritmo híbrido del bugalú), el antedicho pianista y sus cómplices californianos permanecen relativamente fieles al espíritu fundamental de los arreglos atribuidos al homenajeado, mientras inyectan eficazmente la clave rumbera a través de las inventivas melodías y armonías brasileñas que caracterizan a esta docena de hermosas composiciones elaboradas por el inolvidable ícono de Pernambuco que ha sido categorizado por Levine (con muy buenas razones) como "el mejor compositor brasileño del Siglo XX". - Luis Tamargo

*Integrado por Mary Fetting (flauta, saxo soprano, clarinete), John Wiitala (bajo), Paul van Wageningen (batería) y Michael Spiro (percusión).

LA KSHAMBA
Guerreros del Barrio
 (Independent Production)

Oscar and Ray Cruz - Los Hermanos Cruz, as they are known in the business – are surely two of the busiest percussionists in Panamá. They have played with almost every salsa band in that country, and have accompanied about every famous name in Afro-Caribbean music these days, including Gilberto Santa Rosa, Ismael Miranda, Cheo Feliciano, Adalberto Santiago, Rubén Blades, and many more. In fact, they participated in Blades' Grammy Award-winning production *La Rosa de Los Vientos*. The explosive and exquisite *Guerreros del Barrio*, which they recorded with their band, La KShamba, represents their first effort as leaders, the culmination of all their hard work. It includes eleven tunes, featuring collaborations of Omar Alfanno, Tommy Villarini and Orlando Libereros, as well as excellent vocals by Tony Flores and Luis Lugo. Favorite tracks include a remake of Cortijo's classic *Agua Que Va a Caer*, *La Bochinchosa*, *La Toalla*, *¿Dónde Están los Rumberos?*, *Se Me Sube a La Cabeza Tu Amor* and *Guerreros del Barrio*. It took a long time, but it was worth the wait. - Eric Gonzalez



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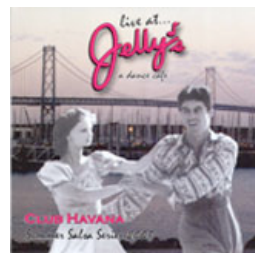
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(Jelly's)

The seven tracks represented on this homespun compilation are a great example of the caliber salsa being produced in the San Francisco Bay Area today. Recorded live over the summer of 2008 at the Sunday afternoon "Club Havana" dance sessions, the collection opens with Louie Romero & Mazacote performing *Si Tu No, La Otra*. It features Manny Martinez on vocals, who leads the band into a high energy spin with a strong and potent performance. The top-notch musicianship reflects in the great solos from the instrumentalists like Peter Cornell (sax). But it's Romero who takes it over the top with a rhythmically inventive solo demonstrating why he is a legend around these parts.

Of the bands represented, Anthony Blea y su Charanga, Ritmo y Armonia, and Avance, have all recorded and released album projects, but it's those unrecorded bands like Karibali, co-led by Karl Perrazzo and Michael Spiro, that unveil the gems of undiscovered talent here in the SF Bay. Add to that list Eric Rangel y su Orquesta America (with Monchi Estevez on vocals), and Rumbache, the band led by percussionist Patricio Angulo (featuring Lina Luna on vocals).

Props to Clarice Lacau and Ricci Cornell of Jelly's, a dance cafe located in the piers over the 3rd St. Bridge from Pac Bell Park (home to the San Francisco Giants), for producing this great summer time audio treat. Engineer Andrew Freid recorded, mixed and mastered the majority of the project and has to be given props for capturing great audio in an acoustically poor environment. They made it work and proved what a swinging dance scene they have nurtured at Jelly's Dance Cafe. – *Jesse Varela*



LUIS ACOSTA

Te Lo Digo Cantando

(LA)

Luis Acosta is a gifted South Bay singer who is making a name for himself in Christian music. Part of the "Salsa Sagrada" movement evolving from Puerto Rico, Luis follows this path on his debut album, *Te Lo Digo Cantando*. Based in San Jose, CA., Luis is a "sonero de primera calidad," who with faith intact delivers an inspired album that is enlightening but not preachy. The grooves and arrangements are exceptional and much credit is due to the talented producer, Willie Ruiz, a master of the salsa dura texture, for creating a swinging musical foundation with a super cast of musicians like Chino Nuñez, George Delgado, Maximo Rodriguez, Luis Bonilla and Richie Viruet. Acosta has a mellow contralto voice that he uses wisely by never pushing his range too far but keeping his delivery strong with clear phrasing and diction for his evangelical inspirations. *Dime Si Lo Conoces* is a hard-driving opener with other tracks standing out like *Carpintero*, *Vuelvo a Sentirme Soñador*, and *Como Sera*. This is music for our times to help uplift our soul during those moments of hopelessness and depression, and the sincerity and love with which Luis Acosta presents his music is sanctified. – *Jesse Varela*



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