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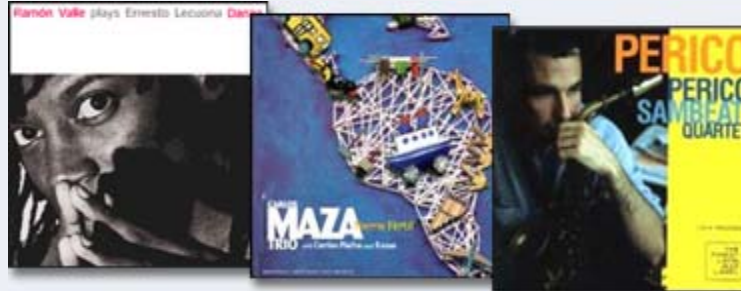
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Latin Jazz in Europe

by Goyo Pappas and Luis Moreno



Posted on June 23, 2002

"Things are happening in Europe. It is a mixed audience. There are people that are very conservative but you also have a very receptive audience. For sure, the recent wave of Latino musicians (like Jerry Gonzalez and I) have found opportunities to learn from the diversity and high caliber of musicians you can find there. We hang and play together when we get a chance and we are very supportive of each other." **Omar Sosa, April 2002**

"The relative invisibility of Latin Jazz within the world of jazz is mostly a U.S. problem. In Europe, they are not so close-minded. The media and the critics here often look at Latin Jazz as some sort of ethnic music and they cannot accept the fact that what we are doing is jazz." **Claudio Roditi, Jan 2001**

Regardless of your opinion about the receptivity of Latin Jazz in Europe, a recent wave of excellent releases indicates that something is happening. One of the wonders of the Internet is that it provides access to music we would not have known about otherwise.

We are living in a smaller world and we are noticing that Latin Jazz can be found anywhere. Nevertheless, it is expensive to have things shipped across the Atlantic. The risk is high since there are CDs by unfamiliar musicians. It is not like going to the local record store. Internet sites where these and other European CDs may be purchased include www.gemm.com and www.discoweb.com

Here are three of our most recent discoveries.

Ramón Valle - Danza Negra
Ramón Valle plays Ernesto Lecuona
www.ramonvalle.com
www.moonstruck.nl
 ACT Germany 9404-2

Ramón Valle was born in Cuba in 1964 and has lived in Europe (Holland) since 1998. He has a few solo piano CDs but this is the one



Dizzy Gillespie & The United Nations Orchestra in London (1989)

LIVE AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

that will really put him on the map. Doing a Latin jazz tribute to one of Latin America's most important composers is a challenge. Most of the interest in Lecuona has come from classical musicians or from those interested in European forms of Caribbean popular music like the danzón. This is understandable since he is a prominent figure in Cuban classical music. He composed operettas, ballets, and opera. Furthermore, most attempts at jazzing up Lecuona's compositions sound either too classical, old-fashioned, or elegant. What Valle does with Lecuona's compositions is admirable. He plays tribute to Lecuona's melodies by changing the context in which we are used to hearing them. Lecuona is a composer with definite French and Spanish influences typical of the mestizaje that characterizes Latin American culture. In Valle's interpretation these influences are present but so is "swing."

An important virtue of this CD is that the music is not centered on the piano. This is truly a group effort by a group of versatile and mature musicians. Ramón Valle has a delicate, melodic, but rhythmic touch. He has his own style.

Born in Matanzas, Cuba, bass player Omar Rodríguez Calvo studied classical and modern music in Havana until 1995. In Europe, he worked with Cubanismo, Ramón Valle, Julio Barretto, Frank Emilio Flynn, Armando Peraza and others. The Spaniard Perico Sambeat shows, once again, that he is at home in almost any musical context. He and Cuban trumpet player Carlos Puig are solid jazz improvisers and their unisons usually carry the melody. Carlos Puig lives and teaches in Madrid. He also appears on Julio Barretto's CD "Iyabó". Then there is Horacio "El Negro" Hernández but he needs no introduction!

This is a well-crafted CD with lots of group dynamics and precision. Everyone gets the opportunity to show their improvisational skills. Overall, the ethnic flavors are varied even within the same cut. There are some gypsy-flamenco overtones as well as moments of Caribbean waltz (Danzón). "Gitanerias", "En Tres Por Cuatro", and "Córdoba" are outstanding because this superb group really gets to stretch out.

Perico Sambeat Quartet - Perico

Lola Records 2001 (Madrid, Spain)

www.lolarecords.org

Spanish sax player Perico Sambeat, from Valencia, is joined by other key figures from the new generation of flamenco jazz. What characterizes this generation is a very solid jazz foundation. It's the result of playing with many straight-ahead jazz musicians in the USA and in Spain. Perico has recorded with Michael Phillip Mossman, Bruce Barth, and



1. DANZA DE LOS ÑAÑIGOS
2. MALAGUEÑA
3. LA COMPARSA
4. ANDALUCIA
5. CORDOBA
6. DANZA NEGRA
7. GITANERIAS
8. LA CONGA DE MEDIANOCHE
9. EN TRES POR CUATRO
10. Y LA NEGRA BAILABA



Ramón Valle- piano.
 Perico Sambeat - alto & soprano saxophone.
 Carlos Puig - trumpet.
 Omar Rodríguez - double bass.
 Horacio "El Negro" Hernández - drums.

All compositions by Ernesto Lecuona.
 Arrangements by Ramón Valle.



1. DRUME NEGRITA
2. DE CAMINO

Wallace Roney. More importantly, they have dedicated themselves to incorporating the rhythms associated with flamenco into their playing and composition. Marc Miralta (drums) and Javier Colina (bass) are members of Chano Domínguez' band. All have in recent years produced CDs that swing with a flamenco groove. They rely on the cajón and the palmas instead of the traditional flamenco guitar.

On this CD, Perico's improvisational and compositional skills are worth noticing. "Drume Negrita" (Eliseo Grenet) and "Te Falta Corazón" (Vicentico Valdés) are the only non-original compositions.

3. **DIDDI**
4. **DESCARGA** (Bulerías)
5. **CITA EN NAMPUR**
6. **TE FALTA CORAZON**
7. **DEFUSS**
8. **DESCARGA** (Rumba)
9. **LO PILLAS?**

Perico Sambeat - alto & soprano saxophone.

Bernardo Sasseti - piano

Javier Colina - double bass.

Marc Miralta - drums, cajón, palmas.

Israel Suárez "El Piraña" - congas, cajón, palmas.

Pepe Motos - cajón, palmas.

Carlos Maza Trio - Tierra Fértil

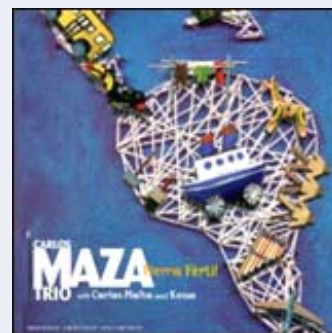
Universal Jazz France (2000)

www.culturekiosque.com

Chilean multi-instrumentalist (piano, charango, saxophones and percussion), and composer, Carlos Maza has been a Cuban resident for twenty years. He is only 26 and goes back and forth between Cuba and Paris. In France, he has recorded six albums and performs only in Western Europe. Dafnis Prieto was his drummer before Dafnis' move to the United States.

Tierra Fertil is experimental South American jazz. There are Brazilian, African and free jazz ingredients but overall the Andean roots dominate. The compositions rely on many rhythmic changes but what is special is the interaction between Carlos Maza and Brazilian sax master Carlos Malta. It is fitting that Carlos would hire a disciple of Hermeto Pascoal to record this CD. Between them, they play so many instruments that it is easy to forget this is just a trio.

Maza has also recorded another CD titled Fidelidad (CD Emarcy 016 109-2) that is Cuban Jazz.



1. **CONGA DE ESPERANZA**
2. **EL SUR LLEGA**
3. **VEN TULLIDO DE MI AMOR**
4. **UNA HISTORIA PARA UNA HISTORIA**
5. **VENGAN TODOS QUE SANCHO RETORNO**
6. **ME LLAMO CHARANGO**
7. **... Y SOY DE AMERICA!**
8. **TIERRA FERTIL**
9. **SENTIMIENTO RASTAFARI**
10. **LA FIESTA DE LAS HORMIGAS**

Carlos Maza - piano, pan & transverse flutes, 10 string guitar, charango, soprano sax, vocals.

Carlos Malta - bass, piccolo & transverse flutes, alto, soprano & tenor saxos, vocals.

Kesso - drums, percussion.

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