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Osmany Paredes & Menduvia
Studios KAIHNA - Mexico
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From Cuba to Mexico and Beyond: Osmany Paredes

by Tomas Peña

Osmany Paredes was born in Santa Clara, Cuba in 1972. He studied at La Escuela Vocacional de Arte "Olga Alonso", where he began playing piano at the age of 8. He continued his studies at La Escuela Nacional de Música de La Habana, and graduated with honors in 1991.

Paredes has collaborated with: La Orquesta América, Bobby Carcassés, La Orquesta del maestro Enrique Jorrín, Israel "Cachao" López, Carlos "Patato" Valdés, Celio González, Amaury Gutierrez (as musical director and pianist), Francisco "Fellove" Valdés, Susana Harp, "Chocolate" Armenteros, the Orquesta Cuarenta Grados and many others.

Osmany has recorded with Eugenia León, La Orquesta de Enrique Jorrín, La Orquesta Cuarenta Grados, Jorge Luke, Joey Astrud, Chocolate Armenteros, Francisco "Fellove", Susana Harp, and has also performed at a wide variety of festivals in Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico. He's been an ambassador of Cuban music in Austria and Germany. Currently resides in Mexico City, where he's dedicated to create his own compositions and musical productions.

OSMANY PAREDES CON MENDUVIA is an excellent independent release recorded at Studios KAIHNA in Mexico in 1999. Five songs are original compositions by Paredes, who presents his musical ideas as a mature pianist with a defined vision. He makes powerful statements with refined skills, deep emotions and indisputable high quality.

An online chat with Osmany Paredes

4/28/02

TP: Congratulations on your debut recording, OSMANY PAREDES CON MENDUVIA. What is the significance of the band's name and how was the band formed?

OP: The term MENDUVIA derives from the word MENDO, a commonly used term in the

Caribbean which is slang for SABOR (tasty, flavorful, etc).

MENDUVIA was formed in January of 1998 under my musical direction. I have always played Latin Jazz, however, I also enjoy playing a variety of genres: swing, bossa nova, boleros, rumba, cha cha, etc.

TP: According to your bio, your father was your first musical influence. Who are some of your other musical influences?

OP: My principal influences include Herbie Hancock, Chucho Valdés, Dizzy Gillespie, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Emiliano Salvador, Bill Evans, Mc Coy Tyner, John Coltrane, Oscar Peterson and many others. I have also been heavily influenced by the "FEELING" (FILIN) movement in Cuba.

Note: Another Cuban product of experimental thinking and intimate settings is the musical movement "Filin" (the word is a Spanish rendering of "feeling"). "Filin" has been defined by some of its creators as un movimiento jazzístico en la música popular Cubana - or phrased differently, music made by performers who knew and loved the styles of Lester Young, Art Tatum and Coleman Hawkins as well as the great traditional singers and composers of Cuba - (Excerpt from: "Cuba, Where The Music is Hot" by René López and David Carp).

TP: Speaking of musical influences, the spirit of Emiliano Salvador seemed to be present in the recording studio!

OP: I dedicated SONIDO EMILIANO to Emiliano Salvador, the great pianist and composer who made many contributions to (Cuban) Latin Jazz and music in general. I wanted to pay my respects to Emiliano because his music has been a major influence on my life and career since I was a child. In my opinion, Emiliano's spirit is present wherever Latin Jazz is played (Cuba, Latin America, U.S., Europe).

TP: Who are the principal band members?

OP: The principal band members are:
Osmany Paredes (Piano and Musical Director)
Barbaro Pérez (Bass)
Hilario Bell (Drums)
Reynaldo Pérez (Flute)
All of the band members are graduates of the Escuela Nacional de Artes (ENA) in Havana.

TP: What is it like collaborating with El Gran Francisco "Fellove" Valdés?

OP: Francisco "Fellove" Valdés is one of the greatest Cuban singers and composers of all times. Moreover, he is a founding father of the FEELING (FILIN) movement in Cuba. I have admired Fellove since I was a child and it is a great honor to be able to collaborate with him and share in his vast experience and creativity. Fellove has been living in Mexico for 30 years.

Incidentally, Fellove was the first Cuban singer of his generation to "scat" (improvise with his voice), he was a major influence on singers such as Guapacha and Bobby Carcassés, who followed in his footsteps. My band, MENDUVIA accompanies Fellove at all of his performances.

TP: You mentioned that there are many great Latin Jazz musicians in Mexico. However, there seems to be a lack of venues that feature Latin Jazz. How has Latin Jazz been received in Mexico and is there a Latin Jazz "scene" in Mexico?

OP: Although Latin Jazz has been well received in Mexico the movement lacks strength. There are only a few bands that play Latin Jazz. Most bands play Jazz Rock, Jazz Pop and Swing. Fortunately, there is a wide variety of concerts and festivals where local bands get the opportunity to play their specific style of music.

I have been fortunate enough to share the stage with many of the major exponents of Latin Jazz in Mexico. Musicians, such as Roberto Aymes (contrabass), Ricardo Benitez (Flute - Cuba), Cristobal López (Guitar), Jako González (Saxophone), Juan José Calatayud (Piano), Tino Contreras (Drums) and many others.

TP: What's in your CD player at home? Name some of the contemporary artists you enjoy listening to.

OP: At home I listen to traditional jazz: Thelonius Monk, Sonny Rollins, Mc Coy Tyner, Herbie Hancock and Bill Evans. I also love Brazilian music (Elis Regina, Tom Jobim, Hermeto Pascual, Egberto Gismonti, Ivan Lins and Djavan). In addition, I listen to classical music and of course, Latin Jazz (Paquito D' Rivera, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Danilo Pérez and others).

Some of my favorite contemporary artists are: Joey Calderazo, Marcus Roberts, Nicholas Payton and Kenny Garrett.

TP: Any thoughts on your next project?

OP: OSMANY PAREDES AND MENDUVIA will be performing at "El Festival de Jazz del Orinoco" in Venezuela in August (2002). We are currently performing weekly at a club-restaurant in Mexico City. I am in the midst of preparing new material for my next project.

Many Thanks,
Osmany

See our review of Osmany Paredes & Menduvia

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