

New Releases

Press Releases

Yahoo! Groups

Calle 54

Anapapaya

Jazz Buffalo

Suggest Link

Submit Article

Submit Review

REVIEWS

home > reviews > live in little village

Conjunto - Live in Little Village

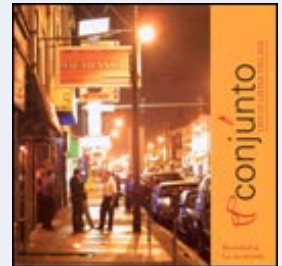
Recorded Live at La Jacaranda

Review/Conversation with James Sanders

by Thomas Peña

If you haven't heard of this world-class Latin jazz ensemble - you will! Conjunto - Live in Little Village captures the passion and sheer joy of Conjunto performing live at La Jacaranda, a night club in Chicago's Little Village.

Posted on January 6, 2003



Produced by James Sanders and Roel Trevino
Amadeo Records
2002

I am happy to report that Latin Jazz Network is the first publication (outside of Chicago) to stand up and take notice of this fine ensemble. You heard it here first!

Conjunto is primarily an instrumental ensemble that performs traditional Latin rhythms such as Guagancó, Mambo, Cha Cha, Son and Afro-Cuban jazz. The roots of their music is Cuban and the line-up is based on the traditional Cuban Charanga ensemble (piano, timbales, flute, violins, bass and other percussion).

The repertoire is a fascinating blend of Cuban and jazz standards such as: Green Dolphin; Consejera, Mambo Influenciado; Footprints, Free Delivery; Historia de un Amor, Tico Tico; Danzón for My Father and Confirmation.

The musicians are: James Sanders - Leader/Violin; Roel Trevino - Congas and Percussion; Donald Neale - Piano; José Porcayo - Bass; Luis Rosario - Timbales and Percussion; Steve Eisen - Saxophones and flute; Danny Feliciano - Bongos and Percussion.

I contacted leader, James Sanders and asked if he would be willing to answer a few questions...

A Conversation with Leader/Violinist James Sanders

TP: When was the ensemble founded? How did you manage to assemble such a fine group of musicians?

JS: Conjunto -in it's current form- evolved in January 2000. I had been playing Jazz for a while, as I developed my own style, my Latino heritage (My mother is Dominican and I grew up in a Puerto Rican neighborhood) came through in my music and I began to look for musicians that would want to be a part of an Afro-Cuban Jazz ensemble. Among the factors that allowed me to organize a

group of such talented musicians is the fact that few opportunities exist to play Latin Jazz in Chicago and we are a band of equals. This is not the James Sanders Show - that is not what I wanted.

TP: Orquesta Aragón has influenced Conjunto in a big way (the line-up, the repertoire, etc). However, that is where the similarities seem to end. Conjunto's sound is reverent, yet it transcends the traditional Aragón format.

JS: Orquesta Aragón represents Cuban music at its best to me. The instrumentation and repertoire gave us a basis (foundation) and a model to start with. Like Aragón - we do not part with Clave based rhythms. We do however improvise a lot more. Our Bass player José Porcayo is such a disciplined traditional Afro-Cuban player that he and our percussion section give the keyboard and horns tremendous freedom. We have a pretty agile line up, Steve Eisen not only plays great flute but he is regarded as one of the best Tenor sax men in Chicago. Whereas Aragón uses a string section playing arrangements with an occasional short solo, I improvise most of my lines and play electric violin in a live performance so the band does not have to change its approach when I solo.



TP: La Jacaranda is the ensemble's home away from home. You even built the stage, installed the lights and the PA system! Tell me your formula for capturing the spirit of the ensemble on this recording (the recording engineer is on the money)!

JS: I think there are a couple of factors that allow for great things to happen at the Jacaranda. The room is not too big and that allows for intimacy. Moreover, the audience is there to listen. Some of the other venues we play are dance situations and that is cool but we have more freedom and a different level of inspiration when people are there just to listen. As far as the recording, Ellis Clark, the recording engineer, was able to capture the sound of the room and this is a testimony to his ears and knowledge. I think it is easier said than done but he did it. The funny thing about it is, I think this was his first Latin project. Can you imagine mixing a Cow bell, Timbales for the first time? Live?

TP: Is the Latin Jazz scene alive and well in Chicago? Name some other bands and/or venues that feature Latin Jazz in the Chicago area.

JS: The Latin Jazz scene in Chicago is not what one would hope for considering the size of the Hispanic community here. There is a great dance scene and that has been helpful to us even though many of the clubs cannot afford live bands or would rather use recordings. Most larger clubs that have tried Latin Jazz don't make enough money and if they have a group it is often 3 or 4 guys playing background music. Latin Jazz is sustained in smaller clubs with supportive owners who love this music. Among local artist who perform on a global level are Master percussionist José Redón, who runs a jam session at a joint called the Art of Sports and there is the grand master of Latin flute - Willy Garcia, one of Chicago's best kept secrets. He performs at a joint called Cafe Bolero.

TP: What kind of a response has your recording been receiving?

JS: I have not really put a lot of effort into promoting the CD, being so busy working as a violinist. But all the feedback has been positive and it has gotten on the airwaves around town. Latin Jazz Network is the first contact that I have made outside of Chicago and I appreciate your support of our efforts on a deep level.

TP: What are Conjunto's future plans?

JS: We will be playing at the Jacaranda every other Friday and I hope to write some more original music. There has also been some interest in having us perform at some festivals

and Colleges in addition to some private bookings.

Thank You James and Good Luck with your new recording!

Thomas Peña
Co-Editor
Latin Jazz Network

For more information on Conjunto and/or to purchase the CD contact:
www.ChicagoLatinJazz.com

Tracks: (click on titles to listen)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Green Dolphin Street | 6. Historia de Amor |
| 2. Consejera | 7. Tico Tico |
| 3. Mambo Influenciado | 8. Danzón For My Father |
| 4. Footprints | 9. Confirmation |
| 5. Free Delivery | |



Credits:

James Sanders: Leader/Violin
Roel Treviño: Congas, Percussion
Donald Neale: Piano
José Porcayo: Bass
Luis Rosario: Timbales, Percussion
Steve Eisen: Saxophones, flute
Danny Feliciano - Bongos, Percussion

Produced by James Sanders and Roel Treviño.
Recorded Live by Ellis Clark on March 8 & May 10, 2002
@ The Jacaranda Club, in Chicago.

[Back to top](#)

[About Us](#) | [Credits](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Web Design : DMN Interactive : © 2001-2006 : [Latin Jazz Network](#)