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Roberto Occhipinti - The Cusp



Record Label: Modica Music  
2003 - Toronto, Canada  
Produced and arranged by  
Roberto Occhipinti

Reviewed by: Thomas Peña



Posted on July 1, 2003

In a recent conversation with bassist Roberto Occhipinti I asked him to describe his vision of his most recent recording, THE CUSP. In brief, Roberto sees the project as, "a contemporary jazz album with some Cuban and African influences."

No argument there. However, after reading the liner notes (by Roberto) and listening to THE CUSP I began to grasp the effort and artistry that went into the making of this recording.

Journalist Geoff Chapman of the Toronto Star weighed in with a similar opinion. He called THE CUSP, "a recording with fresh ideas, smart soloing, dense layered themes and sterling bass work."

I asked Roberto about the making of THE CUSP. Here's what he had to say.

From the start Roberto knew the type of sound he wanted; a cool, orchestral sound with a fiery rhythm section. To achieve this he handpicked a horn section with exceptional ensemble players from Toronto's studio scene.

In addition, Roberto wanted material that would compliment the soloists (Phil Dwyer, Kevin Turcotte, Hilario Durán), so he wrote the charts with them in mind.

As for the "fiery" rhythm section, it doesn't get much better: Pianist Hilario Durán, drummer Dafnis Prieto and percussionist Pedro Martinez, percussionist Chendy Leon and naturally, Roberto on the bass.

The repertoire is wide ranging and diverse. For example: DAVID'S ONDA is Roberto's take on the "CTI (Creed Taylor Incorporated) recordings done in the '70's with woodwinds, brass and rhythm section." Founder, Creed Taylor, built CTI's reputation by preserving high musical standards and creating extravagant productions.

PRIETO AZUL (dedicated to Cuban drummer Dafnis Prieto) could not be truer to its namesake. The Cuban presence is strong in this "24 bar blues with a fast mambo tag." In fact, the ensemble sounds like a big orchestra on this particular track.

DOGON is Roberto's interpretation of the music of Neba Solo. Solo, who hails from Mali, is a superb Balafon and Djembe player. The objective was to "get a sense of his music and vibe for a larger, jazz ensemble." Worthy of mention is Hugh Marsh, whose violin solo is nothing short of spectacular.

VOODOO CHILD (a Jimi Hendrix classic) is inspired by the sound of Gil Evans, Miles Davis and Weather Report, ANA MARIA (by Wayne Shorter) is dedicated to the later trumpeter, Rick Tait, TOSCA (an aria by Puccini) was the first opera Roberto ever performed and T. DOT combines a New Orleans groove with Cuban Timba.

According to Roberto, THE CUSP has been generating quite a bit of interest and offers to distribute the recording have been coming in. As of this writing THE CUSP remains an independent recording, strictly available via the web.

Roberto is eager to appear at New York's JAZZ GALLERY in the near future. In the meantime, he is traveling and recording with his brother, Michael and his band (called NOJO). In addition, he will be touring the Cleveland area with pianist Hilario Durán this fall.

I would be remiss if I did not mention some of the artists that Roberto has performed and/or appeared with over the years: 7 years with Jane Bunnett and the Spirits of Havana; Great Britain's Gorrillaz, Soul Stew (Toronto's #1 soul band); Nelly Furtado, Gino Vannelli, as well as virtually every major Classical music organization in Toronto.

Congratulations to musician, producer, arranger and composer, Roberto Occhipinti for a fine recording that deserves to be heard far and wide!

Thomas Peña  
Co-Editor  
Latin Jazz Network

For additional biographical material on Roberto Occhipinti, visit: [www.modicamusic.com](http://www.modicamusic.com)

To purchase THE CUSP and/or TRINACRIA visit: [www.jazzpromo.com](http://www.jazzpromo.com)

#### Tracks: (click on titles to listen)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <b>David's Onda</b> | 6. <b>Prieto Azul</b> |
| 2. <b>Ana Maria</b>    | 7. <b>Septima</b>     |
| 3. <b>Voodoo Child</b> | 8. <b>The Cusp</b>    |
| 4. <b>T. Dot</b>       | 9. <b>Dogon</b>       |
| 5. <b>Tosca</b>        |                       |



#### Credits:

Roberto Occhipinti - Bass/Producer/Arranger  
Less Allt - Flute and Alto Flute  
Phil Dwyer - Soprano and Tenor Sax; Piano (Dogon)  
John Johnson - Bass Clarinet & Alto Sax  
Kevin Turcotte - Trumpet & Flugelhorn  
James Mac Donald - French Horn  
Alastair Kay - Trombone  
Hilario Durán - Piano  
Dafnis Prieto - Drums  
Chendy Leon - Percussion (Prieto Azul and The Cusp)  
Hugh Marsh - Violin (Dogon)  
Pedro Martinez - Congas (Dogon).

All songs written by Roberto Occhipinti, except "Ana Maria" by Wayne Shorter; "Voodoo Child" by Jimi Hendrix and "Tosca" by G. Puccini.

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