



Celia Cruz



Willie Colon



Latin Grooves

By Carlos De Leon

Photographs by Francene Keery

Classics

Antonio Arcano y Sus Maravillas/Arsenio Rodriguez y Su Conjunto Orquestral Todos Estrellas: 'Mano a Mano' (Carino) This album, recorded 1944-46, is a perfect introduction to the roots of salsa. These two legendary Cuban bands represent the best in their respective styles. Arcano led the meanest charanga of his day, showcasing the danzon mambo, and the talents of "Cachao," and Jesus and Orestes Lopez.

Arsenio Rodriguez, blinded at eight, created the son montuno and the mambo, and was a master percussionist and trestista. His conjunto was extremely popular in Cuba during the '40s.

Machito/Chico O'Farrill/Charlie Parker/Dizzy Gillespie: 'Afro-Cuban Jazz' (Polydor) Machito's Afro-Cuban Orchestra, founded in 1940, fused jazz harmonics with solid Afro-Cuban rhythms. This two-record set presents the Machito band during some of its most exploratory periods (including Macho's recordings with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie). Also included is the famous "Afro-Cuban Suite" by Chico O'Farrill, and the lesser-known "Manteca Suite" written for Dizzy Gillespie. Machito, his musical director Mario Bauza, and arranger/pianist Rene Hernandez, pioneered the sound of salsa.

Tito Puente: 'Dance Mania' (Carino) What more can one say about a living legend? Tito has recorded over 700 singles and is still going strong. This album, recorded around 1958 is considered by many to be his finest. *Dance Mania* is a dancer's delight. Together, Puente and vocalist Santitos Colon are an unbeatable combination. "Llego Mijan," "Complicacion" sound as fresh as anything recorded today.

Eddie Palmieri: 'The Sun of Latin Music' (Coco) Eddie Palmieri is salsa's most soulful piano-player. *The Sun of Latin Music* is his most satisfying album of the decade. The late Rene Hernandez, arranged most of the superb material.

Eddie covers all the bases: danzon ("Una Rosa Espanola"), experimental extended songs ("Un Dia Bonito"), straight-ahead salsa ("Nada De Ti," "Nunca Contigo") and even a wild cumbia a la Palmieri ("Mi Cumbia"). This album won the first so-called Latin Grammy.



Luis "Perico" Ortiz

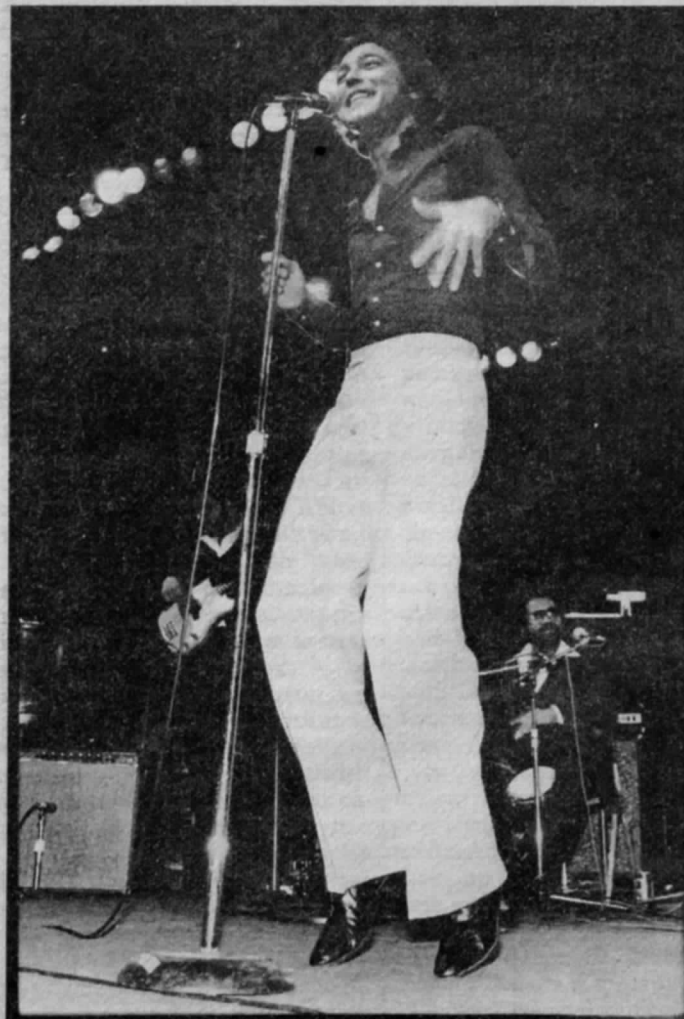


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Ruben Blades

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'Caliente Hot: Puerto Rican and Cuban Musical Expression in New York' (New World Records) A volume in an anthology of American music. Educational and entertaining, it features the bomba and plena tradition by Victor Montanez y sus Pleneros de la 110, and the rhythmic interplay of percussionist Julito Collazo and his Afro-Cuban group. Other forms are also represented. Erudite liner notes put the music of New York Latinos in historical perspective, provide definitions for many musical terms, and explain differences within the forms. There's even a glossary. This hard-to-find album can be located at New World Records, 231 East 51th Street, New York, N.Y., 10022.

Current

Willie Colon and Ruben Blades: 'Siembra' (Fania) Probably salsa's biggest seller ever. Panama's Ruben Blades, widely considered salsa's "hottest" young singer/songwriter, has never sounded better. Willie Colon, South Bronx badass turned country squire, weaves the New York sound with Puerto Rican, Brazilian, and other Latin American rhythms. Ruben's intensely personal, razor-sharp songs reflect both the depressing realities and hopes of Latinos. "Plastico," "Ojos," "Siembra," and Mack the Knife-inspired "Pedro Navaja" are all solid message songs *con mucho sabor*.

Charanga '76: 'Charanga '76 en el '79' (T.R.) Charanga '76, while not as funky as other New York charangas (Ideal, Novel,

Carlos De Leon hosts salsa shows on WKCR-FM and WBAI-FM.