

By Rebeca Mauleón

CARLOS CASCANTE Y SU TUMBAO

Recuerdos (Bettrmusik)



Seattle may be home to expensive coffee and software moguls, but it too has embraced the multicultural sound of Latin jazz fused with Cuban *timba* and more, as evidenced by the debut of Costa Rican vocalist Carlos Cascante. Produced, recorded and arranged by pianist Julio Jáuregui, *Recuerdos* is a surprisingly diverse and upbeat collection of jazz-inspired Cuban rhythms, with Cascante providing solid lead vocals along with a host of special guests including trumpeter Ray Vega, bassist Joe Santiago, trombonist Doug Beavers, saxophonist Ted Dortch and conguero Paoli Mejías.

Rounding out the ensemble are Dean Schmidt on bass, Jeff Busch on drums, Frank Medina on congas and trumpeter Thomas Marriott, who is the focus of Jáuregui's swinging tune "Tomasito." New takes on Latin standards such as Pedro Flores' "Obsesión" and Antonio Fernández's "Al Vaivén de mi Carreta" are injected with more modern harmony while the solid rhythm section keeps everything danceable, especially Santiago's rock-solid *tumbaos*. Vega sprinkles bop-latino magic on the Cascante-Jáuregui tune "El Negro Tiene Tumbao," which flirts with a *timba*-like *montuno* and some funky bass-playing by Dean Schmidt.

With Jáuregui at the helm, Cascante's *Recuerdos* is a very enjoyable ride in the company of fine musicians.

RICK DAVIES

Siempre Salsa (Emlyn)



Trombonist and composer Rick Davies may not have the name recognition associated with the major East Coast Latin trombone players, as his primary contributions in the field of Afro-Cuban music surround his scholarly research and publications on Cuban trumpet techniques. Nevertheless, his association with a number of Vermont and New York-based groups has kept him busy, not to mention his duties as assistant professor at Plattsburgh State University. *Siempre Salsa* is his latest recording in addition to his work with Bronx-based Salsa Picante, and features a variety of configurations—from sextet to big band—as well as two cuts with the Salsa Picante band.

While this recording demonstrates a slightly pedestrian approach to jazz-play-



Harvie S

ers-gone-Latin, his love and enthusiasm for the art form are important to furthering academia's advocacy of *nuestra música*. The opening instrumental track "Cena Para Seis" begins the album with a spirited Latin-jazz feel, but the subsequent vocal and big-band tunes end up sounding mismatched. This effort plays somewhat like a recital of a collegiate big band, and the smaller ensemble vocal tunes feature *coros* so drenched in reverb and delay they might as well have been used in Jamaican dub sessions. Those missteps aside, Davies' academic and literary contributions are certainly worthy of our support and admiration.

IBRAHIM FERRER

Toda Una Vida (Dynamo)



This posthumous release of Cuban veteran *sonero* Ibrahim Ferrer traces nearly three decades of his work with an array of Cuban artists between 1960 and 1988, including the orchestras of Pacho Alonso, Chepin-Chovén and others. Much in contrast to the more traditional sounds of the internationally celebrated Buena

Vista Social Club, these songs, previously unreleased outside of Cuba, demonstrate some of the transitional periods in post-revolutionary Cuban music. It is a sound you can grow to love, especially with such a fabulous selection of classics as well as obscure tunes.

Ferrer's voice is a refreshing mix of father-figure gentility and coy *sonero*, and listening to him across these decades past has a remarkable time-capsule effect. There are tender moments, such as the tribute to revolutionary devotion in the Guantanamo-esque "A Los Cien Años," and the melancholy *bolero* "Perdonarte," which features Ferrer in a lush duet. But the majority of these tracks feature the sounds of Cuba's rock-tinged *son* as well as the newer *pilón* rhythm, wrapped in danceable, postmodern fun. *Toda Una Vida* also includes some hilarious lyrics, such as "Pero Que Suegro," a warning to all wayward in-laws in the world, and the markedly anti-imperialist "Súper Ratón." Highlights such as "Ay, Candelita," "De Camino a la Vereda" and "No Te Precipites" showcase Ferrer in an entirely new light, and will surely delight old and new fans of a sound not often heard off the island of Cuba.