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Ry Cooder & Manuel Galbán

Mambo Sinuendo
 label: Nonesuch Records
 released: 01.28.03
 our score: 5.0 out of 5.0
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Cuban Revival

by: dan marek

Master of the slide guitar, Ry Cooder has tackled genres from blues, tex-mex, Hawaiian, Dixieland, folk, R&B, and in the past few years, he opened the gates of Cuba's rich musical history with the Buena Vista Social Club.

In 1996, Cooder traveled to Havana to assemble some of the best musicians Cuba had to offer. Since the rise of Fidel Castro, many of these artists had been pushed out of their prominent positions in cultural Cuba, but with the release of the recording in America, the musicians of Buena Vista gained across-the-board critical acclaim and out-sold all of Cooder's previous project to date.

With *Mambo Sinuendo*, Cooder brings us back to the 1950s - when popular Cuban music began to show hints of American jazz and pop while the cha-cha and mambo-jazz sounds spread like wildfire among artists like Perez Prado, Stan Kenton and Henry Mancini.

Teaming up with Havana doo-wop guitarist and arranger Manuel Galbán of the famed Los Zafiros (and two of the Buena Vista side-projects), the two set out to recreate the 50s atmosphere with a Cuban electric-guitar band comprised of two guitars, two drum sets, a bass, and congas.

The players are a familiar fare for Cooder, the Buena Vista Social Club's Orlando "Cachaíto" López plays the upright, Miguel "Angá" Díaz plays the congas, and

Disc Details

Tracklist:

1. Dru me Negrita
2. Monte a Dentro
3. Los Twangueros
4. Patricia
5. Caballo Viejo
6. Mambo Sinuendo
7. Bodas de oro
8. Echale salsa
9. La luna en tu Mirada
10. Secret Love
11. Boleros sonambulo
12. Maria la o

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Tax Tricks and Treats

Cooder's son Joachim, joins in on percussion. When working with Buena Vista, Cooder saw an imaginative spark in Dalban that most Cuban traditional musicians steered clear of saying, "If you asked [most Cuban traditionalists], 'How would Lenny Tristano play Danzon,' most anyone would tell you that Lenny died so they have no idea, and so on. But Galban enjoys this kind of thinking, and it's how we were able to invent a context for this record."

The result is clearly shown in the introduction of the album with "Drume Negrita," a track that pulls you in with a simple conga beat, then slowly adds the layers of upright bass and the themed space-aged 50s guitar to place you on the sun-soaked beaches of Havana while classic tail-finned Chevy's drive by in the summer heat.

The driving rhythm "Los Twangueros" gets your hips to shake side to side upon the first beat as a surf guitar floats over altering rhythms that bounce between the wall of congas and vibraphone.

The Hammond intro played by Cooder on "Caballo Viejo" blends into a cut-up of blues meets traditional styling while Galbán tip-toes around the melody adding accents hidden below the traditional Simon Diaz song. A newly composed track for the sessions, the title cut "Mambo Sinuendo" shuffles around a customary beginning then blends into a more up-to-date musical pop sense that wouldn't have been explored by earlier Mambo-jazz trendsetters like Perez Prado (whose song "Patricia" is also on the album) and Henry Mancini.

The beautiful simplistic guitar work between both artists is accentuated by the lonesome and wistful playing on Fain and Webster's "Secret Love" (the only American written song on the album). With slight accents by López on bass, the two circle around one another's sound hinting at chords and trading off solos until drifting off into silence.

Slipping into "Bolero Sonámbulo," a piano player (not mentioned in the liner notes) moves elegantly across the keys while the signature slide guitar of the album grunts in moving slyly across the song until both intertwine and agree to meet somewhere in the middle. Finishing off the album, "Mar?a La O" sums up the album perfectly with a somewhat surf-guitar beginning and stems off into the mellow visions and beats of the island once again. With frequent beat stops and a slew of rhythm accents, Cooder's guitar work effortlessly winds around while he and Galbán switch off lead and complement each other's work flawlessly.

Although his work with Buena Vista spotlighted the traditional sound of the island, Cooder kept hearing

Blur - Think Tank

Cody Chesnutt - The Headphone Masterpiece

Ziggy Marley - Dragonfly

Linkin Park - Meteora

t.A.T.u. - 200 km/h in the Wrong Lane

Typewriter - Skeleton Key

Kelly Clarkson - Thankful

break/doWn!




"In Da Club" by 50 Cent
- lyrics translated

sounds that brought him back to Havana. Beside Galbán, Cooder has found a rich tradition in Cuban music that had faded away with the Bay of Pigs in the 60s only to revitalize the sound and make it their own with such a wonderful nostalgic album.

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