

"Media-International, National & Regional"



**2006 Grand Marais Jazz Festival:
Left to Right: Krate, Othello, Rolando, Roger, Eddy,
Mario and Baris**

Check [article](#) on All About Jazz.Com on line for the new CD: Live: Volume One

Vinilemania Radio Show & on line Magazine
[article](#)
[...best Latin Jazz Albums in Italy](#)



2006 Jazz in Cincy Festival, with special guest Grammy Nominee Othello Molineaux. L to R: Othello, Michael & Mario

Check out this [article](#) that appeared online on Columbus Columbus Alive!!, Columbus Musicians favorite records

**Article on Parade of Stars e-News August 2007
Nashville, TN by Chuch Chellman
2007 Update:**

The international award winning Latin jazz septet, Rolando Matias & The Afro-Rican Ensemble, have established themselves as one of the hottest and most requested Latin ensembles in the country. Thanks to their blistering& high energy performances at festivals, music halls and jazz series, the Afro-Rican Ensemble is highly regarded in the Jazz and Latin Jazz circles, nationally and internationally. The Ensemble's recent success at the Jamaica Ocho Rios Jazz Festival, Dominican Republic Jazz Festival and St. Lucia Jazz Festival has opened the door to many others international festivals. Aas well as to an invitation to head back to Jamaica for a Thanksgiving for a performance at the Coral Cliff Hotel & Casino in Montego Bay. And a return engagement to the Jamaica Ocho Rios Jazz Festival as well as the St. Lucia Jazz Festival. The Afro-Rican Ensemble has performed or shared the stage with the elite of jazz for the new millennium along with living legends: Giovanni Hidalgo, David Sanchez, Hector Martignon, Paquito D'Rivera, B-3 madman Ron Levy, Gerald Albright, Special FX, The Rippingtons, James Moody, Rufus Reid, Andy Gonzalez, Chucho Valdez, Adela Dalto, Christian McBride, Toots Thieleman, Kenny

Werner, Stanley Terrentine, Joshua Redman, Brad Malhdau, Johann Brackeen, the legendary Orquesta Aragon from Cuba, Steve Reid, Nina Freelon, Pamela Williams, the legendary Claude "Fiedler" Williams, Carlos Malta, Los Hombres Calientes (Bill Summers & Irwin Mayfield), Kenny Rankin, Sunny Sumter, Toni Nation (Australia), Mimmi Fox, and many others. And their unanimous decision was clear, the Afro-Rican Ensemble is breaking ground through the international scene aggressively with their own brand and sound of Latin flavored jazz.

Dayton Daily Journal, Jazzbeat 12/29/02

Dayton, Ohio

"Once again the Jazz Room at Pacchia was turned into a Latin jazz party last weekend by the Afro-Rican Ensemble. With conguero Rolando Matias leading the way, the band kept the music hot and the crowd was dancing, clapping and singing along. Pianist Mauricio Martinez, bassist Ariel de la Portilla, conguero Cecilio Valdez Washington, drummer Shane Willis, trumpeter Ted Chubb and saxophonist Paul Levy all get plenty of solo time and they all make the most of it. As usual, the group closed with their theme song, Guantanamera, and got the audience to sing along. It wasn't quite as wild as it was the last time when they had three more horn players sitting in, but it was exciting nonetheless."

Don Henke

Dayton Daily Journal, Jazzbeat 12/01/02

Dayton, Ohio

"That Saturday night was Latin night downtown as the AfroRican Ensemble played at Pacchia that night. Rolando Matias brought his entire seven-piece band into the small room. They were soon joined by trumpeter Mario Abney, trombonist Stan Middleton and saxophonist Aaron Holbrook. That made five horns and five rhythm and the Pacchia crowd was rocking the place. This was a night when everybody listened to the music and enjoyed it. That doesn't always happen at the trendy club where people go more to be seen and to talk than to listen. But they were loving the music that night."

Don Henke

THE AFRO-RICAN ENSEMBLE

"Latin, Soul-sa and Jazz"

www.DownBeatJazz.com-online Down Beat Magazine-Dec 1999:

"And with a high-intensity fusion of Bebop and Latin rhythms, Matias has led the band to some impressive early success..."

Jason Koransky

Down Beat Magazine online

The Courier-Journal

Louisville, Ky

"Saturday's concert literally ended with a bang, with many audience members joining in with a rhythmic vocal riff of "bang, bang" as they danced to the Afro-Rican Ensemble's infectious Afro-Cuban/Puerto Rican rhythms."

Rick Mattingly

There is such a freshness about this recording from The Afro-Rican Ensemble, I was impressed with the tasteful blending of African rhythms and Latin Soul. Their music brings a welcome new sound to the jazz scene while still showing a deep respect and understanding of the traditional masterworks. Further, it gets better with every listen and it was great to to start with!

Phyllis A. Campbell

**A.K.A. Mama Jazz
Nightly Jazz Show WMUB-88.5 FM, Miami, Ohio**

The Afro-Rican Ensemble explodes on the scene with a first release that finds a central theme in firsts. The group kicks off with the funky strut of Freddie Hubbard's "Homegrown", recalling the composition as performed by Hubbard on his release "Bolivia". This rendition is a full bombast, taking off from Giovanni Hidalgo's Conga lines (played here admirably by Rolando Matias) and infusing another level of rhythm with the inclusion of Cecilio Valdez Washington's percussive attacks. Add to that Keith Newton's full-blown assault on the flute and you are immediately jerked upright with the awareness that this is a disc to contend with.

Round two delivers an upper cut with Horace Silver's "Song For My Father". In 1964 Horace Silver revamped his hugely successful Quintet, placing Joe Henderson in the tenor chair and replacing an experienced rhythm section with then unknown talent. One of the first recordings in this new configuration was "Song For My Father". The Afro-Rican Ensemble emulates this fresh approach and captures the youthful energy and vibrancy of that original session. "Song For My Father", Afro-Rican style is *nouveaux bossa nova* with some surprises thrown in.

Track three, the Jaco Pastorius composition "The Chicken", is a groove. Jaco was one of the preeminent bass players of our time and never better when he let loose with his own funk interpretations. The Afro-Rican Ensemble has a solid rhythm section that hints here at what a live performance must be like. Jazz is often defined as a cerebral experience, one that requires more mental than physical attention. This track, however, is visceral, toe-tapping energy.

It has been said that "Afro-Blue", along with "Manteca", are two of the most important compositions in the history of Afro-Cuban jazz. One of the first songs Mongo Santamaria performed with his first band in 1961 was "Afro-Blue". John Coltrane saw it as a pivotal piece and his recording of it is considered a major classic. On track four The Afro-Rican Ensemble bless us with their rendition of this major composition, a tribute of the Afro-Cuban Tradition. With its bluesy melody, 6/8 rhythm and percussive overtones it addresses both mind and the heart.

"Cizzy Strut" (track five) is a Meters composition that holds its own alongside all the classics included in this recording. Perhaps future generations will review this arrangement in the same light as the accompanying classics. In the meantime we can delight in its inclusion here.

"A Love Supreme" (track six) is quintessential Coltrane. The Afro-Rican Ensemble grace this disc with the opening section of this Coltrane classic (Part 1- Acknowledgement). Coltrane aspired to lift us to another plane with his music. The Ensemble tracks this classic with compassion and a supreme love for Coltrane and his vision.

After many trackings of this release by The Afro-Rican Ensemble it is evident from the tight rhythmic structures, to the superb soloing, to the respectful interpretations of jazz classics that this is a powerhouse band with a distinct sound. Let's hope there are many more such releases from the group in the future.

Michael Packer
Music Director
WGVU Radio / Grand Rapids, MI

**The Afro-Rican Ensemble:
National Publications and Newspapers:**

A full decade of touring have taken the Ensemble to every corner of the World, bringing a high-energy bran of Afro-Clave-Jazz. Currently getting air play coast to coast, Europe and the Caribbean, making top twenty in many Latin Jazz shows. Steve Reid, founding member of The Rippingtons, commented after enjoying the Ensemble at the Elkhart Jazz Festival: "The Afro-Rican Ensemble is a well keep secret that is ready for the Jazz Limelight, with a combination of Jazz melodies and Afro-Caribbean harmonic rhythms they have created a vocabulary of their own." The Afro-Rican Ensemble has performed in many festivals throughout the US , including The Grand Rapids Jazz & Blues Festival, Pittsburgh Mellon Jazz Festival, The Flint Jazz Festival, Virginia Beach Arts and Jazz Festival, Chattanooga Riverbend Festival, Oberlin College Music Festival, Beloit College Folk, Jazz & Blues Festival, Delaware Arts Festival, Columbus Jazz Festival, Elkhart Jazz Festival, The Columbus Arts Festival and Columbus Latino Festival to name a few. The Ensemble has performed for many Jazz Societies, Art Museums Jazz Series, and Universities/Colleges (The Ohio State University, Grand Valley State University, University of Michigan, Oberlin College, Beloit College, University of Dayton, etc.) across the nation. Last April the Ensemble was invited to perform on BET on JAZZ, the national jazz cable network, Washington, D.C. The Ensemble recorded a Jazz Central session at the BET on JAZZ restaurant, and were feature on Jazz Scene, the jazz talk show hosted by Sherry Carter, featuring the latest on the Jazz scene today. They shared the show with Joshua Redman, both shows will be aired later this summer.

Last fall, the Ensemble recorded their second project-Fruits From the Rhythm Tree, produced by and featuring Andy Gonzalez. The three time Grammy nominee performed on two standards and coordinated the production of the project. The project also featured international Jazz Vocalist, Adela Dalto, on four cuts, including her original lyrics to Dizzy's Fiesta Mojo; Kim Pensyl, another national artist with Columbus roots, helped on trumpet, and jazz guitarist Stan Smith rounded the line-up of guest artists, he also contributed two original compositions, the jazz mambo "These Guys" and the bossa " Until Then. "The project featured ten original compositions and a number of obscure jazz standards, and two classics of Latin music-El Cumbanchero (R.Hernandez) and Tanga (M. Bauza), these two classics featured Andy Gonzalez on bass and were done with an extreme sensibility to the original compositions. These two cuts will be featured on a compilation by CuBop Records (a division of Ubiquity Records) later this fall. Also, later this fall the Ensemble will appear in yet another compilation put out by Jamlet Records for The Biltmore Estate, The Vanderbilt Estate Mansion in North Carolina. This compilation will feature two new original compositions by the Ensemble, a traditional Cuban danzon- Abstraccion Cubana, and a rare " a caballo rhythm" -Graciosa. The danzon will feature Columbus's own master violinist, Christian Howes.

This Fall, the Ensemble will be touring the islands of Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Performing at the Dominican Republic Jazz Festival, in Sousa with David Sanchez and Puerto Rico, where they will perform at series of Concerts around the island Universities, with some club dates in San Juan.

Melina Huddy
The Music Gazette

The Charleston Gazette:
May 99'

...if you closed your eyes for a few minutes, you might have thought you were in Havana in 1950.

Johnathan Rodgers

The Parkersburg News:

It's jazz music with a twist. The blend of percussion, flute, bass, saxophone and piano brings a whole new meaning to the term "jazz"... The group is known for its blending of Salsa-like tunes with straight ahead jazz, creating an "eclectic" sound...

Jeanna Marshall

JazzTimes:

November 98'

...solid musicianship, the right dash of savor, and a refreshing absence of self-indulgence.

Marcela Breton

Cadence Magazine-Creative Improvised Music:

September 98

...it supplements the tradition with nods to the groundbreaking work of Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo, the New Orleans connection and Conrad Herwig's recent John Coltrane Latinization..., a great example of current Afro-Caribbean trends.

Larry Hollis

The Grand Rapids Press:

May 7, 1998

...you can feel the chemistry and positive energy, it comes out strong in the music.

Lazaro Vega

The Paper:

Grand Rapids,

April 30, 1998

With its full spread of Latin Percussion, the band attracted record attendance, absolutely shaking the crowd with its hypnotizing Latin swing.

Julie Strand

Bravo Magazine:

Spring 98

The ensemble is a tasteful blending of African Rhythms and Latin Soul.

Margarita De Leon

The Flint Journal:

August 17, 98

Sunday's Headliner, The Afro-Rican Ensemble relies on the irrepressible rhythms of its music, which included both originals and as diverse as Santana and Sanders. The group's absorbing rhythms and seductive soloing were big hits with Sunday night's SRO crowd.

Doug Pullen