

# ELIEL LAZO & THE CUBAN FUNK MACHINE

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## Virtuosic echoes from the golden age of Cuba

The Cuban conga virtuoso, Danish resident Eliel Lazo, shows his true form with affectionate references to the Cuban scene of the 1970's. His release, ELIEL LAZO & THE CUBAN FUNK MACHINE featuring BOB MINTZER, connects to the days when Los Van Van and Irakere ruled the scene on the Caribbean island, and each new album with these groups was a new experiment in combining jazz with *són* and rumba. But Eliel's album is also very much his own story, because although he was only a big boy back then, he debuted at an early age with teachers whom had been among the first musical pioneers. He played with Oscar Valdes' band Diákara from the age of 16, and learned from the best. As he says today:

- I worked regularly with Oscar Valdes and his group Diákara at a venue called Jazz Café in Vedado close to the street Malecón, which runs along the beach in Havana. We played three days a week there, and I played two others days weekly with a band called Habana Ensemble, which was the last band I played with, before I left Cuba.

## Ten years in Denmark

Eliel Lazo arrived in Denmark precisely ten years ago to perform with the DR Big Band, and since then he has set a significant mark on the Danish music scene. Not least in Mikkel Nordsø Band - and bandleader Mikkel Nordsø couldn't resist Eliel's invitation to join the Cuban party when the conguero called. Nordsø and jazz guitarist Per Gade color the songs with great imagination, including the lazy, grooving *El Verdadero Amor*, on which Lazo shows his talent as a vocalist. Finally, there is the American saxophonist Bob Minzer. He joins in with his authentic sound, and sound engineer Flemming Rasmussen adds his magic final touch.

The album is full of elaborate and extremely funky lines, highlighting the interplay between Eliel Lazo and his favorite bassist Yasser Pino and the Norwegian resident, Cuban drummer Raciél Jimenez. The trio excels on the breathless *New Songo*, with the drummer taking off towards the end, and Eliel on his four congas pulls off one of his limitless solos, giving meaning to his nickname "God's Hands".

## Authenticity

The album brims over with authenticity and daring: On *Rhapsody In Abuka* we are introduced to a necromancer with authentic *santería* beats before winding up on a jazz journey, where Bob Minzer makes it clear why a saxophonist of Jaco Pastorius and Yellow Jackets fame traveled all the way from Los Angeles to take part in this recording. The folk life sets the scene for the movie on our inner eyes, and Yasser Pino's tight bass and Eliel's congas march along the streets of Havana. Check out this album. It is one of the most ambitious recordings combining World music and jazz ever to be released in this part of the world. We will let Eliel Lazo have the final say:

- This is joyous music - optimistic and experimental rhythmically - but most of all joyous music. Happy jazz. People talk of World music... it's too large a field. There are so many genres in World music, so I have chosen to call my music Cuban Funk. That way people know that it is Cuban and that they can dance to it.

We have mixed in jazz, blues and timba, which is the new style back in Havana.

- It is difficult for me to define the style exactly, but it is a lot like Los Van Van in the 1970's, which is a lot different from how they sound now. In the old days they were very funky. The way they sounded in the '70s with input from The Headhunters, Irakere and that whole trend. I'm very satisfied with the album. Enjoy!

ELIEL LAZO, PERCUSSION AND VOCALS / BOB MINTZER, TENOR SAX / CARLOS PEREZ, TROMBONE  
AND CHOIR / ANDREAS PÁLSSON HAMMOND, B3 ORGAN / MIKKEL NORDSØ, GUITAR  
/ PER GADE, GUITAR / YASSER PINO, BASS / RACIEL JIMENEZ, DRUMS

DEJA VU / TABUENO / A VER QUE SALE / SUNNY BEACH RUMBA /  
LATE NIGHT ZOMBIE / EL VERDADERO AMOR / NEW SONGO /  
RHAPSODY IN ABAKUA / PIÑA COLADA

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