

Mp3 Otra - Todo Pa'la Gente



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Exciting new Afro-Cuban Jazz and Grooves from New Orleans. 9 MP3 Songs LATIN: Salsa, JAZZ: Latin Jazz Details: One of the nicest surprises on the New Orleans music scene the last two years has been the emergence of the Afro-Cuban jazz band OTRA. Founded by the eclectic bassist Sam Price (a force behind the bluegrass band Uptown Okra as well), OTRA serves the primal function of a Latin band: playing music for dancing your butt off. Two rhythm section veterans, the Cuban conguero Pupi Menes and the Columbian timbalero Cristobal Cruzado, guarantee that. Unlike many bands that might be lumped together in the "salsa" category, however, OTRA's appeal extends beyond its rhythmic allure. A good deal of credit for this must go to the band's keyboard player, Rob Block. An East Coast native who lived in St. Louis for 10 years before moving to New Orleans two years ago, he is a modern jazz wizard as well as master of Afro-Cuban styles (and if that isn't enough he's a killer guitarist, too). Block composed five of the CD's nine tracks, and in addition to his wonderful playing and writing, he has a knack for keeping the horn charts interesting and for providing fine backing for hornmen Eric Lucero and Brent Rose. Much of this has to do with avoiding that most dreaded of latin music devices (for the non-dancing listener anyway), the endless one-or two chord montunio. In addition to the Block originals, Todo Pa'La Gente contains two traditional melodies, paeans to the Cuban "orishas" or spirits arranged by Price, and a jazz standard, "Nature Boy." It's a well-rounded program fit for musicologists and booty-shakers alike. --Tom McDermott

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