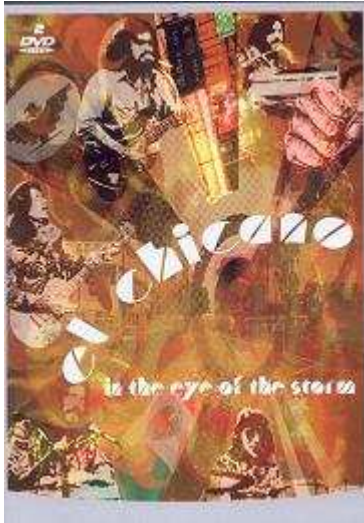


**Sunday, December 6, 2009**

**[El Chicano: In the Eye of the Storm](#)**



Rock & Roll has a unique sound that, despite its variations, in many cases can be pigeonholed into that category. Santana represents one of those variations, with the incorporation of a strong percussion that provides rhythmic support – via congas and timbales --to the old-fashioned drums. His sound is recognizable and separates his band from the rest. However, the contributions of other Latin bands, mainly of Mexican decent, deserve equal credit in the history of recorded music. They were responsible of the so-called “Brown Sound,” which was represented by Tierra, El Chicano, War, Malo, and others, with Los Lobos being the most recent, successful addition to this prestigious group. Unfortunately, visual images by means of commercial DVDs are lacking to present the excitement of their music to the world. Enter “El Chicano: In the Eye of the Storm,” a passionate and electrifying double-disc DVD set that sheds some light about this magnificent band from East Los Angeles.



The first disc of this set features the documentary “El Chicano: In the Eye of the Storm,” directed by Daniel E. Meza, in which we learn the history of El Chicano. The band was created in the sixties, and it was originally called The V.I.P.s. It was during the recording of their classic hit “Viva Tirado” that a producer named them El Chicano, which they didn’t object at the time. This move, fortunately or unfortunately, depending of you point of view, married them to the nascent Chicano movement (Chicanos are people of Mexican descent born in the United States). This automatically connected them to the acid politics of the movement, which tried to improve the lives of Chicanos in the United States. They were just a bunch of guys that liked to play music, and involuntarily, according to them, got involved in political concerts and causes. The history of the personnel changes within the group is also discussed with interviews of past and present members, such as Bobby Espinoza, Fred Sanchez, Mickey Lespron, Rudy Regalado, and

others. Sadly, missing was Ersi Arvizu, the only female singer in the group's history, who did not want to participate in the production. In addition to the interviews and historical footage, the documentary has segments of the band's concert at the Avalon, which is showcased in its totality in the second disc. The DVD also includes extended interviews and footage of the band at practice.

Taped live at The Avalon, in Santa Clara, California, on May 2008, this vibrant and majestic concert features some of El Chicano's best known hits. It opens with "Viva Tirado otra vez," a powerful instrumental from the album "Celebration," which serves to introduce the band in the most awesome way. Also from this recording, the band plays "Más Zacate," "Juntos," and el "El Grito." From their very first album, they give us, of course, "Viva Tirado," "Coming Home Baby," and their version of the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby." Then, there are also "Tell her she's lovely," the only non-instrumental cut, sang by Jerry Salas, taken from the LP "El Chicano." On the other hand, representing their album "Cinco," the band played Tito Puente's "El Cayuco," while from the classic "Revolución," they included Willie Bobo's "Spanish Grease," "Cubano Chant" and "Chicano Chant," which energetically closes the concert. Altogether this exciting DVD features twelve well-selected tunes.

"El Chicano: In the Eye of the Storm" has long been due to the fans of El Chicano and the Brown sound. Almost everything and anything that you need to know or hear about this band is included in this fantastic DVD set. Hopefully, more productions documenting the sound of East Los Angeles will follow. (USA, 2009, color and B&W, 159 min plus additional materials). Reviewed December 6, 2009. **Inakustik**

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