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Juan Pablo Torres "Romantic Cuba"

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The opening tracks of {^Romantic Cuba} are culled from the November 1975 sessions where the master trombone player puts his instrument down to orchestrate and direct the {EGREM Orchestra} in a compelling and substantial way. It's as exotic and exhilarating as the best moments of {Paul Mauriat}, heavy orchestration over the piano of {Pedro Coto}. Why this material wasn't exported to the world is the real question, significant "space age bachelor pad" music which would make {Esquivel} proud - though sans any of his experimentation - and with none of {Ferrante & Teicher}'s playfulness. The piece{"Cuenta Conmigo"} is as invigorating as {"Terrible Sueno"} is stimulating, the percussive precision as no-nonsense as the guitar, piano and strings. Marvelously inspiring throughout these once hidden sounds recorded in San Miguel, Havana, delight track after track in the same way that {Percy Faith}'s {"Theme From A Summer Place"} and {Peter Nero}'s {"Theme From The Summer of '42"} are immortal memories for fans of pop radio in the early 60's and early 70's respectively.

This music made a mere four years after Nero's 1971 hit is like an undiscovered sequel. Don't expect the music found on the combination of the {^Con todos los hierros} (which means "with all horns") and {^Súper-son} albums by Torres, also released on the {Malanga Music} label, to show up on the first half of {^Romantic Cuba} that is the re-release of the orchestrated {^Mangle: Instrumental} recordings, it's the second half of the disc, the album {^Grupo Algo Nuevo}, which returns us to the traditional trombone meets percussive sounds found on {^Super-son}. And in this context it works very well, the superb orchestration a not-so-odd doppelganger to this rhythmic Cuban excursion, at times displaying a bit of what made {Hugo Montenegro} such a splendid movie going experience. The packaging is excellent with detailed liner notes by {Helio Orovio}, full color lp cover reproductions inside the booklet and flawless sound on the CD itself. A definite treasure.

- Joe Viglione

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