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SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2008

Record Review: Omara Portuondo "Lagrimas Negras Canciones y Boleros"

Whenever I hear the Buena Vista Social Club or any of its members, I am always taken back to my glory days in college when I convinced the director of our spring main stage production; Eric Bogosian's "Suburbia" that we NEEDED to use The Buena Vista Social Club as part of the soundtrack to the show. Being the shows sound designer and also being familiar with the playwright's work, I felt that I was best inclined to make this judgment.

I think I made everyone sick with the hypnotic beginning of their song "Chan Chan." Not me! I thought it was great; a real breakthrough for my otherwise white, suburban college. But because this song led off the show and because nobody could get the blocking in the first scene right; we revisited those same familiar guitar chords over and over again.

So it was with a fair amount of interest that I recently was able to check out Omara Portuondo latest two disc release "Lagrimas Negras (Black Tears) Canciones y Boleros." Portuondo was one of the singers from the Buena Vista Social Clubs 1997 Grammy award winning album and sang with the likes of Ibrahim Ferrer, Manuel Licea, Ruben Gonzalez, and others. Portuondo is also featured in the documentary Buena Vista Social Club which was directed by Wim Wenders.

This is a double disc edition and is inclusive of a number of fine songs from this commanding front lady. This album was "the result of an interpretive creation full of feeling, intimacy, and naturalness," according to the liner notes. There is a great deal of feeling from this seasoned vet, all of which is on full display in the jangling, ambling, happy tunes.

Portuondo has been singing professionally for more than 50 years; she has a deft and impressive command of not just the notes and the harmony but also of the feeling which makes her fans swoon and was a large part of the crossover success of the Buena Vista Social Club. One commentator, Manolo Ortega has affectionately labeled Ms. Portuondo "Feeling's girlfriend." When it comes down to the music on "Lagrimas Negras" it definitely shows.

Standout tracks on this double set are too numerous to mention; but include the laid back opener, "Incredible" where her sultry voice is accompanied by a jazzy saxophone and the gentle strums of a guitar; the lazy horns of "Vieja Luna;" the restrained exasperation in her voice on a tune like "Nosotros;" and a standout track of both discs "Como es posible" her duet with

Buena Vista Social Club

Everything to do with Buena Vista Social Club items.

1 r Canciones



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This is the place to come for all the latest news and reviews for NOT Michael Bolton or Mariah Carey...We're kind of interested in obscure/indie...Although I do have an affinity for that "Seattle Scene" from the 90's (is that obscure again?)...And The Shins.

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