

## Taking Latin jazz beyond Cuba

Paquito D'Rivera and Omar Sosa, both born in the island nation, strive for a melting pot of sounds

**BYLINE:** Gregory Pappas SPECIAL TO THE AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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"The Afro-Cuban tradition is fine," says Paquito D'Rivera. "But doing the same thing over and over again gets old, just (like) eating rice and beans everyday." That's a pretty daring thing to say in 2002. Ever since the Buena Vista Social Club scored a sleeper hit in 1996, Cuban music has been a hot ticket in the United States. And D'Rivera, who plays at the One World Theatre on Saturday night, is well placed to take advantage of that. The 53-year-old Havana-born saxophonist and clarinetist was a founding member of two of the most important bands in Cuban history: Orquesta Cubana de Musica Moderna and Irakere.

But upon defecting to America and moving to New York City in 1981, D'Rivera was able to indulge a long-standing interest in other musics of **Latin** America -- Brazilian, Argentinian and Puerto Rican, especially. "The bands that I formed during the 1980s were 'escuelitas' (schools), with musicians coming from very different places and musical backgrounds in **Latin** America," D'Rivera explains in a phone interview from his home in New Jersey. "For example, Danilo Perez (Panama), Claudio Roditi (Brazil), Michel Camilo (Dominican Republic) would interact and learn from each other." The band D'Rivera will bring to Austin is similarly polyglot: Diego Urcola and Dario Eskenazi hail from Argentina, Oscar Stagnaro is Peruvian and Mark Walker calls Chicago home. That's the same lineup that recorded 2000's "Live at the Blue Note," which won a **Latin** Grammy for Best **Latin Jazz** Album. It's a group that is in the forefront of the move to push **Latin jazz** away from a familiar focus on Cuban forms and toward a broader Pan-American vision.

This weekend, Austinites will get a rare chance to hear two different versions of this trend, as Friday night the One World Theatre will host a performance by a young lion of the Pan-American movement: pianist Omar Sosa, who is just starting to make a name for himself in **jazz** and **Latin** music circles.

The history of **Latin jazz** is, arguably, as old as **jazz** itself. "Before Louis Armstrong there were Cuban trumpet players in New Orleans," D'Rivera says. "New Orleans was part of the Caribbean. (The great bop trumpeter) Fats Navarro was a Cuban-Chinese. And let us not forget (the early **jazz** pianist and composer) Jelly Roll Morton's assertion about the '**Latin** tinge' of **jazz**." Though **jazz's Latin** roots are often obscured by "purists," there are occasional eruptions of interest among **jazz** musicians. In the 1940s, the great trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie teamed up with Chano Pozo and Machito to forge a Cuban-styled version of be-bop. In the 1960s, Brazilian bossa nova helped saxophonist Stan Getz score a major hit with "The Girl From Ipanema."

Today, **Latin** America's rich variety of rhythms, styles and instrumentation is reinvigorating **jazz**, a music that has lost much of its audience and cultural cachet.

Sosa is pushing that process as hard as anyone. His fusion is, if anything, even more daring than D'Rivera's, as it draws on gnawa, the trance music of Morocco, as well as hip-hop. Born in the Cuban city of Camaguey in 1965, Sosa never had a chance to study with D'Rivera. But the saxophonist influenced him nonetheless. "Since I was a kid I was interested in strange stuff and

was exposed to a variety of music, including **jazz**, through my dad's LPs," he explains by phone from Oakland, Calif. "But there were two LPs that made a mark on me and that got me curious about the rhythms from the rest of the Americas. One from the Conjunto Folklorico Nacional and one by Paquito D'Rivera."

Sosa moved to the San Francisco area in 1995 and has already recorded seven wildly varied albums, a reflection of his travels. "Before you experiment you have to know and live the roots. I was not ready to assimilate the gnawa music until I visited Morocco. My two years in Ecuador I learned about the black folkloric music tradition of its north coast."

Sosa lives in Barcelona now, part of a wave of **Latin jazz** musicians who have moved to Europe, where they have found a receptive audience. The septet he is traveling with for his eight-city tour of the western United States reflects the breadth of his approach. "To Texas we are bringing vocalist Martha Galarraga from Cuba," he says. "Bouchaib Abdelhadi from Morocco will provide the gnawa vocals. Gustavo Ovalles is a master percussionist from Venezuela. Our bass player and drummer come from the straight ahead and free **jazz** world."

Sosa, who trained as a percussionist at the prestigious National Music School in Havana, uses the analogy of cooking to describe his group's process. "The food from Brazil may taste different than the one from Africa but the difference is not in the condiments but in how it is made. There is nothing new about the ingredients. The challenge is to unify or integrate."

That's a challenge both Sosa and D'Rivera face squarely. And though their musics sound very different from each other -- Sosa emphasizes the connections between Afro-**Latin** traditions and other African rooted musics around the world -- both are motivated by a universalist impulse. "All the best formal musical training in the world is worthless if you have an egocentric or a nationalistic attitude," says Sosa. "We are all connected in one way or another to Africa."

To listen to a track from Paquito D'Rivera, dial Inside Line at 416-5700 and enter category 1750.

`Paquito D'Rivera'

When: Saturday, 7 and 9:30 p.m.

Where: One World Theatre

Info and Tickets: 32-WORLD: \$29-\$70

To listen to a track from Omar Sosa, enter category 1751.

`Omar Sosa Septet'

When: Friday, 7 and 9:30 p.m.

Where: One World Theatre, 7701 Bee Cave Road

Tickets: Tickets: 32-WORLD; \$29-\$45

**Caption: Pianist Omar Sosa is part of a wave of Latin jazz musicians who have moved to Europe, where they have found a receptive audience., Paquito D'Rivera: The Latin jazz great's bandmates hail from various countries.**