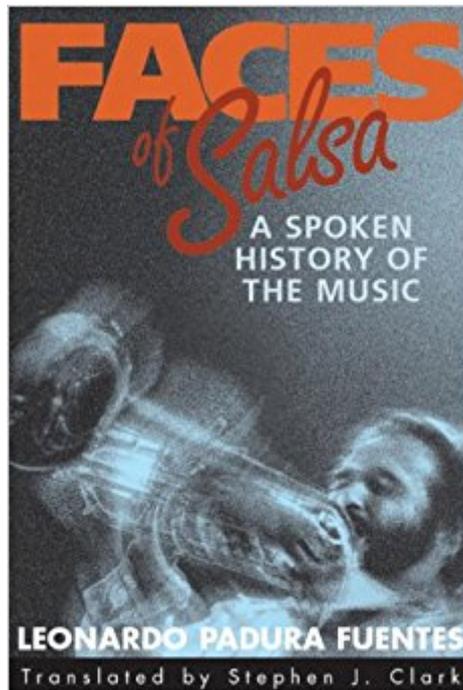


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Faces Of Salsa: A Spoken History Of The Music



Synopsis

In this collection of masterfully crafted interviews with some of the most famous creators of the music we call Salsa, prizewinning Cuban novelist Leonardo Padura Fuentes explores the genesis of the music, its rise in popularity, its social context, and its artistic legacy. Filled with personal revelations by the musicians, historical detail about their lives and times, and colorful anecdotes about their identities, friendships, and working relationships, the book is a tribute to the artistry and social commitment of some of the most inventive artists of our time. In his brilliant introduction about the idols of Latin music since the 1920s, and throughout the book, Padura takes up the old dispute about the relationship of salsa to the Cuban music known as son, but the book is not a search for origins. Rather, through his conversations with a group of extraordinarily articulate musicians, he reveals how the aesthetics of salsa filled a cultural void, transforming popular Latin and Caribbean dance music and creating a new generation of musicians who would establish a new model: the salsero, an artist who had embarked upon something his forbearers never did—a conscious project.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For many, the word salsa connotes rhythm and excitement. For Leonardo Padura Fuentes, it represents the struggle of a people to create music with meaning. In this book, the Cuban writer interviews thirteen men who figured prominently in the Latin music scene during salsa's early development. Their various journeys explore music as a form of expression, protest, and inspiration.

And they all point to a genre that has sought to reconcile flash with substance, popularity with meaning. They point, writes Fuentes, to a "salsa with a conscience". No discussion of salsa history is complete without the unsolvable debate over the very word "salsa". How did the term come about, what music does it encompass, is it even a valid categorization of the music it connotes? Some of the very musicians responsible for making salsa what it is today give their take on the term and whether it should be used at all. Most interesting is Fania founder Johnny Pacheco's take on the term that he is said to have created to market the music, as well as Cuban musicologist Radamés Giro's more detached view on the label. The interviewees also discuss the roots of salsa, from its evolution from the Cuban son to the great variety of Caribbean influences to the development of its urban identity in the Latino barrios of New York. The exploration of salsa's roots and the labels that define it are not only a matter of history. Fuentes' interviews reveal the conscious struggle of Latin musicians to maintain a balance between salsa as music and salsa as commodity. Music can inspire, enlighten, reveal, and criticize. It can speak to people's conditions and point out injustices. It can also, on a purely musical level, push the limits of rhythm, instrumentation, and improvisation.

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