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Representante De La Salsa - Susie Hansen (Jazz Caliente)

Violinist Susie Hansen should be relatively well known by now, having led her popular band in Southern California since 1990 and released a couple of good salsa-meets-latin jazz CDs on the way. Her debut "Solo Flight" (Jazz Caliente 1993) was more latin jazz than salsa, but the 2002 release on the same label "The Salsa Never Ends" gave her a major salsa dancefloor hit with her own adaptation of Alfredo de la Fe's kicking tune "Salsa Computarizada", renamed by Susie "La Salsa Nunca Se Acaba".

"Representante De La Salsa" is only Susie's third solo latin music CD in 20 years but sometimes it is good to wait. As always it's a pot-pourri of salsa, latin jazz, cha cha cha and English language latin music tracks. For dancers, there are five fantastic salsa tracks which should fill any dancefloor. The title track is a bouncy opener, a nice mid-tempo salsa swinger that blends electric violin and brass perfectly. I really love "No Te Metas Conmigo", a charanga moderna track with great montuno and vocals plus fantastic charanga flute solo Cuban style by Tim Messina.



The brass really punches in with some great mambos and the whole feel of the band reminds me of great modern charanga orchestras like Charanga Tapa and Son Primero. "Te Quiero, Te Amo" and especially "Si Me Vas A Querer" are beautiful salsa romantica tracks but without the limpness this style can attract. Final salsa cracker is the closer "Y Sigue Pensando", a great arrangement by Ramon Flores.

Latin jazz tracks that stand out are "Si No Contigo" and "La Calles De Chicago", giving a chance for Miss Hansen to really stretch out as well as piano, brass and percussion. Regarding the English language tracks, I'm not as impressed by these as the salsa originals. The Ides Of March 1970s rock-soul classic "Vehicle" gets a salsa arrangement although it doesn't sound too different from Carlos Olivia's salsa version a few years ago. The "Frank Sinatra Cha Cha Cha" medley and "Beyond The Sea" are nice cha cha arrangements of the great American songbook but they verge on "smooth latin jazz" to these ears. Maybe vital for US airplay but for club play, nice but not essential.

So on the whole, I think the CD comes out on top. Any salsa/latin jazz release nowadays that can give a DJ or dancer 7 great tracks out of 11 is a good release. Add to that the fact Miss Hansen plays excellent salsa/latin jazz violin, the original material and arrangements are first class, the band are slick and the production is great, you can definitely say this is a good release.

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