

Closeup

RED HOT—Mongo Santamaria, Tapan Zee JC36596 (CBS). Produced by Jay Chattaway.

Santamaria's debut LP for the Bob James label is the best example of commercially flavored Latin music this veteran listener has heard in years. In actuality the session is an exercise in expanding formula jazz to pick up the exciting elements inherent in Afro-Cuban music of which percussionist Santamaria is a long-standing exponent.

Producer Chattaway, who also arranged five of the six cuts, has done a masterful job of providing a station in life for the outstanding James school of East Coast sidemen who get first call on his dates.

These hotshot jazzmen meld in perfectly and understandably within the milieu of Latin and quasi-Latin, quasi disco (look out, here's that disco influence making itself felt in this Latin environment), fusion jazz melange.

This is an enervating, complex experience made all the more biting by the inclusion of compositions by six composers who have given Mongo a freewheeling sound upon which to perform his percussive tricks.

Interestingly, Mongo plays no solos on any of the tracks and is heard instead in a supporting role, subservient to the soloists who include Randy and Mike Brecker, Hubert Laws, Eric Gale, Doug Harris and Mark Colby, among others.

The biggest treat is the reworked, expanded disco version of Herbie Hancock's melodic monster, "Watermelon Man." The 6:34 opening cut blends funky Latin music with standard disco devices (throbbing



Mongo Santamaria

changes for the second cut, "A Mi No Me Enganan (You Better Believe It)."

This chart by Marty Sheller offers an authentic cha-cha band sound of the 1950s with Charlie Palmieri's piano in the traditional role of playing chordal, passes and melody leads as bridges between the brass parts.

Where Mongo played bongo and conga on the opening cut, he stays with the congas on this tune. He stays with congas on "Jai Alai (Rena)," a flowing work by bassist Gary King which has a bullring as its setting. Barry Mileer Moog and synthesizer are the lead melody instruments, with King's thumping bass really prominent with some "Star Wars" type space sounds ricocheting throughout the closing bars of the tune.

the sound for the second, Doug Harris playing a slow flute solo on his "Jamaican Sunrise." Eric Gale's electric guitar getting its first spotlight and Mongo working on bongos.

"Afro-Cuban Fantasy" by Chattaway is the LP's heady, serious work. Military drums, softly in the background, are one of a number of different drum patterns which propel the composition. Mongo plays the Cuban batu drum as do two other percussionists and the drum sound is more deadened than alive. Bob James' electric piano solo is full of jazz vitality and Mark Colby's soprano sax solo emphasizes the mid and low ranges.

Side two starts in a slower mood with author Doug Harris playing a slow flute solo on his "Jamaican Sunrise." Eric Gale's electric guitar getting its first spotlight and Mongo working on bongos.

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"Sambita," the closing tune, finds Mongo on bongos and conga as the beera, Gary King, Doug Harris, J. beach, the shining day, bright sunny day, the northern and overhanging banners observed from a speeding train, conceivable. The full sound of the band with the brass emphasized, also conjures pictures of a Brazilian city with beautiful people and beautiful architecture. So much for visual impressions.

Musically, the marriage of Chattaway with composers Hancock, T. Guerra, Gary King, Doug Harris, J. Almarino and J. Gelardo is a sympathetic and understanding one.

Santamaria is in good hands, although it would have been nice had the producer given him more of a forefront position. The cat does know what's he doing.

ELLIOT TIEGEL

KPRC show a jazz treat

By PAMELA LEWIS
Post Reporter

KPRC-TV (Channel 2) gave Houston jazz fans a treat Sunday night with their locally-produced special, "Jazz: Yesterday, Today and Forever."

The sounds were sweet, the musicianship was smooth, and for the most part, the camerawork was good. The two exceptions to its overall excellence were the intrusiveness of a film clip of exploding fireworks during a saxophone solo by Arnett Cobb, and the refusal of the cameramen to give closeups to the horns.

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the fingerwork on the wind instruments. This reporter got awfully tired of looking at puffing cheeks and pursed lips when the musicians' virtuosity could have been shown.

Flutist Doug Harris, who also composed two of the pieces played, was superb. His music ranged from gently flowing tunes to the earth-shaking dissonant and choppy music associated with light to heavy beats.

Cobb, who played one of his own pieces, "Smoothe Smoothe Sating," was a master at work. Pianist Bruce Bryant's organ solo also excellent.

Bubba Thomas, on drums, was the special's producer. KPRC's Bruce Bryant, director, and the station's Tom Reiff was executive producer.