



2013 GRAMMY NOMINATED

MANUEL VALERA NEW CUBAN EXPRESS

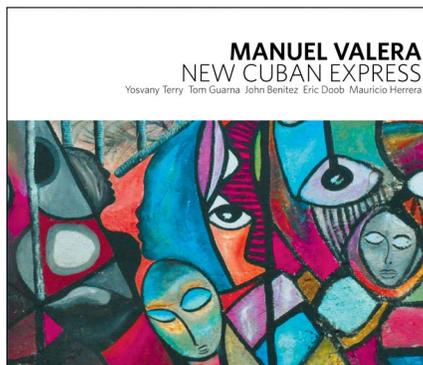
“He leaves no doubt that he is destined to play a role in the future of jazz.”

—Philip Van Vleck, *Billboard*

the recording New Cuban Express—which marks Valera’s sixth record as a leader and a new direction in his playing and writing—consists of eleven Valera originals and two covers, focusing on material derived from the Afro-Cuban tradition.

MANUEL **VALERA** | Piano, Fender Rhodes, Keyboards
YOSVANY **TERRY** | Alto and Soprano Saxophone, Chekere
TOM **GUARNA** | Electric and Acoustic Guitar
JOHN **BENITEZ** | Bass
LUDWIG **AFONSO** | Drums
MAURICIO **HERRERA** | Percussion

the band Manuel Valera and the New Cuban Express is a project deeply influenced by the experiments of Cuban artists from the 70s and 80s. While inspired by artists Irakere, Emiliano Salvador and AfroCuba, this working band creates a unique and distinctive style that mixes elements of Jazz, R&B, fusion and funk with Cuban music styles.



OCTOBER 2012 ISSUE

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latest press quotes

“The sound is both old and spectacularly new in terms of his re-invention of the music of a tradition to which he is inextricably linked. And this increases Valera’s importance as a musician in the arena of Afro-Cuban music.

—Raul da Gama, Latin Jazz Network, June 2012

New Cuban Express is one of the best new Latin Jazz releases we’ve heard this year (or in a while, frankly), and sets a bar that will be hard for others to jump over.

—Bill Tilford, Timba.com, June 2012

With New Cuban Express, Valera stakes his claim for the establishment of a new sound in fusing rhythms of Latin with elements of modern/fusion.

—Edward Bianco, EJazz News, June 2012



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‘Best Latin Jazz’ Album

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MANUEL VALERA & THE NEW CUBAN EXPRESS

the press release

Composer-Pianist Manuel Valera Conjures Deep Roots On Sixth Outing as a Leader, New Cuban Express

After flirting with Latin rhythms within a modern post-bop context on his five previous releases, the brilliant Cuban-born pianist and composer Manuel Valera has put together the album of a lifetime. That recording, **New Cuban Express, is nominated for the 2013 Grammy Awards.**

As a followup to 2009's trio recording, *Currents*, a savvy collection of jazz standards and originals, Valera has dipped into his own Afro-Cuban roots on his superb new release, *New Cuban Express*. Accompanied by fellow Cuban musician Yosvany Terry on alto sax, Tom Guarna on guitar, John Benitez on electric bass, Eric Doob on drums and Mauricio Herrera on percussion, Valera and his empathetic crew summon up percolating polyrhythmic grooves on this outstanding clave-fueled outing.

Alternating between piano and Fender Rhodes electric piano, with touches of Mini-Moog and synth seasonings layered onto the highly-charged proceedings, Valera stretches on driving numbers like the infectious title track, the burning "Choices," the turbulent "Gismonteando," the chopsbusting "Cinco Contra Tres" and the urgent funk-fusion closer "Makuta." He reveals a romantic side on the traditional flavored "Danzon," which erupts into a scintillating son montuno jam midway through with spirited call-and-response statements from Terry on soprano sax and Guarna switching from acoustic to electric guitar. "Upwards" triggers memories of Chick Corea's spicy synth-laden outing from the '70s, *My Spanish Heart*, while Valera wails on Fender Rhodes on "Choices" and "Regards." The two well-chosen covers here are the harmonically intriguing "Me Faltabas Tu," by Jose Antonio Mendez, and the percolating Afro-Cuban workout "Poly," by Emiliano Salvador.

Throughout this potent, hard-hitting outing, Valera joins with guitarist Guarna and saxophonist Terry on tight, chops-busting unison lines while Benitez and Doob combine with percussionist Herrera to provide the churning polyrhythmic undercurrent. Guarna and Terry also distinguish themselves with their sizzling solo contributions on Valera's most fully-realized outing to date. And Herrera, who plays bata on "Interlude," takes a dramatic conga solo on "Intro to Gismonteando" and contributes an energized timbales solo on "Poly," provides the all-important Afro-Cuban flavor on this rootsy project.

Currently based in New York, where he has resided since enrolling at the New School in 2000 and subsequently studied with pianist Richie Bierach, saxophonist George Garzone and bassist Reggie Workman, Valera is establishing his rep within jazz circles as a talent deserving of wider recognition as both a prolific composer and accomplished pianist who is directly tied to the Chick Corea-Herbie Hancock-Keith Jarrett lineage. With a killer crew on board for his latest release as a leader, the Cuban-born artist takes a major leap forward in his promising career with his sixth outstanding release as a leader, *New Cuban Express*.

For More Information, Bio and Tour Dates on Manuel Valera go to: manuelvalera.com Chris@TwofortheShowMedia.com 718-669-0752

the artist Based in New York City, Grammy nominated pianist and composer Manuel Valera was born and raised in Havana, Cuba. Since arriving in NYC, he has become well known in the NYC modern jazz scene, garnering national reviews and lending his talents as a pianist and composer to such notable artist as Arturo Sandoval, Paquito D'Rivera, Brian Lynch, Dafnis Prieto, Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Chris Potter, Dave Binney, Adam Rogers, Mark Turner, John Benitez, Samuel Torres, Joel Frahm, Yosvany Terry and Pedro Martinez among many others.

This dynamic and prolific artist has recorded six cds as a bandleader. His critically acclaimed debut cd in 2004 *Forma Nueva (MAVO)* features John Patitucci, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez Bill Stewart and Seamus Blake. *Historia (Fresh Sounds New Talent, 2005)*, a jazz quartet with Antonio Sanchez, Seamus Blake and Ben Street. His third release *Melancholia (MAVO, 2006)*—employs a string quartet incorporating world rhythms and classical concepts in the jazz idiom. *Vientos (Anzic, 2007)*, representing a new working quartet, features bassist James Genus, drummer Ernesto Simpson, saxophonist Joel Frahm and a woodwind quartet. His fifth and trio recording *Currents (MaxJazz 2009)* features Ernesto Simpson and James Genus.

In addition, he has been awarded several grants for composition most notably Chamber Music America's New Jazz Works and the ASCAP Young Jazz Composer Award. Manuel has travelled the world performing in over 30 countries at some of the biggest international venues and festivals.

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DOWNBEAT[®]

Jazz, Blues & Beyond Since 1934

Manuel Valera *New Cuban Express*

MAVO 1104

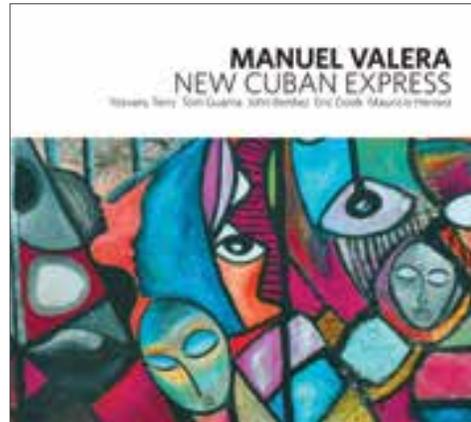
★★★★½

Cuba-born pianist and composer Manuel Valera knows both sides of the Latin jazz street. It would be tempting to slap that label on this fiery collection of his originals. In truth, though, this is a jazz album that uses

Afro-Cuban music as an undercurrent and a jumping-off point.

Valera is an extravagant musician, and his measure can perhaps be divined from his solo “Intro To Upwards”: From an ordered, classically derived motif to effusive two-handed flourishes to single-note lyricism to a pumping montuno, Valera sets the table for a charged ensemble workout led by Yosvanny Terry’s galvanic alto sax. The group sound is full and animated; when Valera throws in swaths of electric keyboard or Rhodes color—yet another source of sonic surprise. Trap drummer Eric Doob and percussionist Mauricio Herrera provide such dimensional rhythm that Valera and guitarist Tom Guarna—who spins tangy single-note solos on “Choices” and “Regards”—are free to play rhythm or not.

Even with a sextet, Valera sustains exciting simultaneous musical currents. Somebody please give him a big band date. —Kirk Silsbee



New Cuban Express: New Cuban Express; Intro To Upwards; Upwards; Choices; Me Faltabas Tú; Regards; Poly; Intro To Gismonteando; Gismonteando; Interlude; Cinco Contra Trés; Danzon; Makuta. (69:34)

Personnel: Manuel Valera, piano, Fender Rhodes, keyboards; Yosvanny Terry, alto and soprano saxophones, chekere; Tom Guarna, electric and acoustic guitars; John Benitez, bass; Eric Doob, drums; Mauricio Herrera, percussion.

Ordering info: manuelvalera.com