

"Fango Dance". Elmer Ferrer Band.
2005, Johnston Records.
A review by: Juan Camacho ¹

It seems there's a new guy riding fast over the hills of the guitar community these days -his name is Elmer Ferrer and he leads his own blues/rock/jazz fusion outfit, the Elmer Ferrer Band. First of all, I think you know, however, Elmer is not a newcomer, he's 32 years old guitar player who has been active on the Cuban scene since the early '90; owner of a fluid style as a guitarist, combining elements of rock and jazz idioms, he has managed himself to be able of performing live or recording with a lot of different Cuban artists during the last years. A former member of electric jazz bands such as Estado de Ánimo, Temperamento and Interactivo here in Cuba, Elmer released his first solo album called **Metrópolis** (Unicornio/UN-CD 9024) in 2002. This album received the Best New Album award at Cubadisco International Fair, and was also nominated as Best Jazz Album. At the time of that release, jazz and rock oriented audiences in Cuba paid a lot of attention to Elmer's music. But it wasn't enough. Although the record received a good airplay on some radio stations, it was clear that the next step should be more challenging. Elmer Ferrer was ready to make history with his new adventure.

On his second effort **Fango Dance**, axeman Elmer has a powerful team of players surrounding him -the Elmer Ferrer Band- in fact, an eager bunch of excellent musicians with many, many nights of jazzclubbing behind them. The musical trip on **Fango Dance** begins with "Satch-arina", an uptempo number inspired on guitar great Joe Satriani and, in the meantime, a joyful ride for Elmer and keyboardist Alexis Bosch. The choice for the right single would be "Crazy Window", I think there's a mix of Cuban music flavor and bluesy guitar on the intro, with fresh vocals also by guest Anders Drerup singing real life lyrics written by Xyrla Fernández. Title track "Fango Dance" has a deep feeling of bluesy power when you hear Elmer's solo on guitar. A robust piece of music with strong guitar riffs and the whole band exploding on certain passages.

The Latin jazz vibe appears suddenly on "Natural Hardware", another Ferrer's original tune, just a good showcase for the band's skills as well: keyboard player Alexis Bosch works with taste and finesse on his piano break...and there's even more - you can feel a good interplay between bassman Juan Pablo Domínguez and drummer Amhed Mitchel, both of them forming a tight rhythm section.

There's a balance of different moods throughout the album, from stunning blues tracks to jazzy themes and even a good dose of shredding guitar too. You'll find some space for more introspective tracks (all played with passion and intensity) like "El mar no descansa" or "E-blues", possibly the most ambitious piece for Elmer and his band on a real blues bath. The highlight for some listeners will be surely "Estática", because of its dynamics and powerful guitar tone. Drummer Amhed Mitchel must be some one to watch in the future. Unexpectedly, the final track "Apagón" brings to mind some Michael Hedges, Leo Kottke or Adrian Legg's acoustic voyages.

There are two covers on **Fango Dance**, being "Come Together" (Lennon/McCartney) one of the versions, and just the other one, "Couldn't Stand The Weather", the well known Stevie Ray Vaughan's classic. I would say my favorite is "Come Together", ear meal with wah wah guitar solo and after that, hip hop vibes and party from Canadian guest singers Anders Drerup, Shawn Tavenier and Peter Voith, all of them members of Ottawa's band Bourbon Brothers. On the other side, worthy to mention Shawn Tavenier's vocals on "Couldn't Stand The Weather", for not trying to imitate Vaughan when he sang the tune. Great -he's got the gig!-

Concerning influences, some people will point a finger towards Scott Henderson or Steve Ray Vaughan to measure Elmer's guitar work. I don't subscribe to this view. I mean, he's just an unusual type, who walks somewhere between Wayne Krantz, Jesse Gresse, Pat Martino, spiced with a little bit of Steve Lukather and yes- a healthy proximity to Scott Henderson sometimes. As a bonus: Elmer enjoys a lot all the crazy stuff from people like Zakk Wylde, Vernon Reid and Angus Young. You never know!

This is a solid blues/rock album with jazzy touches which will appeal to jazz fans, blues lovers and followers of guitar virtuosity all over the world. As a growing talent, Elmer Ferrer works on a league of his own. He's daring, he's cool; he plays with conviction.

Outstanding tracks: "Estática", "E-blues", "Crazy Window", "Come together", "Fango dance".

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1. Juan Camacho is a Cuban writer, researcher of Jazz, Rock, Funk and Blues, and a Radio Programs Director: "Disco Ciudad" (since 1990) and "Terapia" (since 1988). His articles and reviews had appear in "Conecte" (Mexico); "Wondrous Stories" (England); "Extra" (Spain); and "La Jiribilla", "El Punto G" and "Jarock de Café" (Cuba). It was Juan Camacho, "Juanito" as he is known in Cuba, is whom first called Elmer a "Guitar Sniper" on an article for the Cuban Newspaper La Jiribilla, 2002. [Read the article "Elmer Ferrer: a guitar sniper".](#)