



**Legendary Percussionist Poncho Sanchez Returns to His Roots
With His 24th Concord Picante Release
Psychedelic Blues
Available September 29, 2009**

If music were about pictures, percussionist Poncho Sanchez's music would best be described as a kaleidoscopic swirl of some of the hottest colors and brightest lights to emerge from either side of the border. At any given show, on any given record, fragments of Latin jazz, swing, bebop, salsa and other infectious grooves collide and churn in a fiery swirl, with results that are no less than dazzling.

All of these sounds and more come together in *Psychedelic Blues*, Sanchez's twenty-fourth recording on Concord Records set for release on September 29, 2009. "The last couple records have gone a little heavy on the soul music, which has gone over really well in our live shows, but we wanted to do more of a straightahead Latin jazz record this time – something in the tradition of our earlier Concord records that we made back in the '80s."

With that strategy in mind, Sanchez enlisted guitarist Andrew Synowiec to change up the sound on a few tracks. Synowiec, a regular member of the L.A.-based Gordon Goodwin Big Phat Band, landed the gig about five minutes into his audition. "He came through the door with just a guitar and an amplifier," says Sanchez. "No effects pedals or other gadgets. He plugged and started to play, and I said, 'No more auditions. We're using this guy.'"

Along with Synowiec is the same lineup that has backed Sanchez on several records and countless live shows: keyboardist/arranger David Torres; saxophonist Javier Vergara; trumpeter/flugelhornist Ron Blake; trombonist/arranger Francisco Torres; bassist/vocalist Tony Banda; timbalero George Ortiz; and percussionist/vocalist Joey De León. Even a couple alumni from earlier configurations of Sanchez's band – baritone saxophonist Scott Martin and percussionist Alfredo Ortiz – step back in to lend a hand on *Psychedelic Blues*. A few of these seasoned players go back more than 30 years with Sanchez, back to some of his earliest gigs as a local fixture in the Los Angeles club circuit.

Although born in Laredo, Texas, in 1951 to a large Mexican-American family, Sanchez grew up in a suburb of L.A., where he was raised on an unusual cross section of sounds that included straightahead jazz, Latin jazz and American soul. By his teen years, his musical consciousness had been solidified by the likes of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Cal Tjader, Mongo Santamaria, Wilson Pickett and James Brown. Along the way, he taught himself to play guitar, flute, drums and timbales, but eventually settled on the congas.

At 24, after working his way around the local club scene for several years, he landed a permanent spot in Cal Tjader's band in 1975. "I learned a great deal from Cal," says Sanchez, "but it wasn't as though he sat me down and taught me lessons like a schoolteacher. Mostly it was just a matter of being around such a great guy. It was the way he conducted himself, the way he talked to people, the way he presented himself onstage. He was very elegant, very dignified, and when he played, he played beautifully. The touch that he had on the vibes – nobody has that sound. To me, he was – and

is, and always will be – the world’s greatest vibe player.”

Sanchez remained with Tjader until the bandleader’s death in 1982. That same year, he signed with Concord for the release of *Sonando!*, an album that marked the beginning of a prolific musical partnership that has spanned more than 25 years and has yielded two dozen recordings.

Psychedelic Blues, the latest product of that partnership, opens with the simmering “Cantaloupe Island,” a Herbie Hancock composition recast in a Latin jazz groove. A number of soloists step forward here, most notably Torres on trombone and Synowiec on guitar – all weaving effortlessly above a firmly anchored rhythm section.

Premier Latin trumpeter Arturo Sandoval – Sanchez’s friend since their first gig together at a festival in Sardinia, Italy, some twenty years ago – makes a guest appearance via a rendition of Freddie Hubbard’s “Crisis.” The track showcases Sandoval’s respect and reverence for the American bebop maestro who had passed away just a few months before the *Psychedelic Blues* sessions.

The title track is a fast-moving mambo, originally written by Sonny Henry and arranged here by Francisco Torres, who attaches a surprise at the end of the track. “Francisco really souped it up,” says Sanchez. “The song has some nice horn lines, and some great jazz riffs, and then it ends in a bolero. So the song burns almost all the way through, and then at the end it shifts into a ballad.”

The intriguing centerpiece to the album is a Willie Bobo medley featuring “I Don’t Know” (a Sonny Henry piece commonly associated with Bobo), the laid back “Fried Neckbones and Some Homefries” and the slightly more urgent “Spanish Grease.” All three of these songs merge effortlessly to create a nostalgic nod to the revered Latin and Afro-Cuban jazz percussionist of the ‘60s and ‘70.

Further into the set, Sanchez and the band turn “Silver’s Serenade” – originally a swing tune by Horace Silver – into a mambo with personality to burn, thanks in large part to solo work by Francisco Torres. When Poncho himself steps forward to deliver some syncopated conga lines, the net result is an infectious groove.

The salsa-flavored closer, “Con Sabor Latino,” is an old song by Rene Touzet, a native of Cuba who became a well known Latin bandleader in Los Angeles in the ‘50s and ‘60s. In many ways, the song is Sanchez’s tribute to some of the musical memories of his childhood. “My older brothers and sisters used to see Touzet play at the Hollywood Paladium,” he says. “Back then, Chico Sesma was the only Latin disc jockey on the radio in southern California, and ‘Con Sabor Latino’ was his theme song.”

Whether it’s salsa, straightahead jazz, Latin jazz, or even elements of soul and blues, the mesmerizing array of sounds and colors from Poncho Sanchez’s youth have telegraphed across the decades and continue to inform his creative sensibilities to this day. “There’s room for a lot of different sounds in our music,” he says. “I think people have come to know that that’s what Poncho Sanchez is all about. We put it all together in a pot, boil it together and come out with a big stew. This isn’t some marketing strategy to sell records. These are the sounds I grew up with. So when I play this music, I’m not telling a lie. I’m telling my story. This is the real thing.”

On Sunday, September 13, the master conguero will kick-off his album release with a live performance Spaghetтини’s in Seal Beach, CA. For more information: <http://www.spaghetтини.com/>

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