

# OTRA

AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ AND GROOVES

## ABOUT US



**O**TRA was formed in Feb. 2002 by bassist Sam Price. After performing with other New Orleans-area latin bands that played a standard repertoire of popular latin covers, Price sought to create an original project that would emphasize creativity, powerful soloing, and irresistible grooves, while honoring the afro-cuban roots of 'latin' music.

Cuban conguero 'Pupi' Menes and Price had played together in various latin bands. Columbian timbale master Cristobal 'El Canon' Cruzado was coaxed out of retirement from 20 years in a Bourbon St. show band (young Venezuelan percussionist Gabriel Vasquez now alternates timbale duties). Saxophonist Brent Rose's incendiary, soulful playing was just the voice the band needed. When original trumpeter Bob Garrett left, Rose recruited Eric Lucero, a close friend and section-mate for many years. The two share great on-stage comradery and rare musical intuition. The final piece fell into place with the arrival of pianist/guitarist Rob Block from St. Louis in May, 2002. Block brought with him a wealth of experience from the St. Louis and New York latin scenes, as well as great writing skills.

Influences that can be heard in OTRA's sound include: The Fort Apache Band, Charlie and Eddie Palmieri, Arsenio Rodriguez, Poncho Sanchez, Mongo Santamaria and Cubanismo.

OTRA attempts to bring a rock n' roll attitude and excitement to its live performances, encouraging audience members to 'do their own thing' on the dance floor in an effort to help listeners relate to the music in a new way. In this way OTRA hopes to introduce many new listeners to afro-cuban jazz...not by watering it down or fusing it with hip-hop cliches, but with honest, passionate performances that intrigue the ear and delight the soul!

**SAM PRICE - Bass** : Raised in Slidell, LA, Sam has been working in the New Orleans music scene since 1991. He has had the opportunity to perform in a variety of musical genres from Blues and rock (Rockin' Jake, Irene Sage, The Desires) to Funk (New World Funk Ensemble, Smilin' Myron), Bluegrass (Uptown Okra) and Latin (Fuego, Elegant Gypsy, Acoustic Swiftmess, Fredy Omar' and Hector Gallardo's Impulso).

**BRENT ROSE - Saxophone** : After a four year stint in the Marine Corps band, Brent went on to earn his Masters of Music degree from the University of New Orleans Jazz Department. He has performed with Galactic, New World Funk Ensemble, Nicholas Payton, Frank Morgan, The Temptations and many others. As one of New Orleans' most sought after saxophonists, Brent currently performs with Quintology, Gatemouth Brown, Stanton Moore, New Orleans Night Crawlers, Joe Krown Organ Combo, Have Soul Will Travel, Chevere, The Naked Orchestra, New Orleans Street Beat and New Orleans Rhythm and Blues Company.

**HUMBERTO 'PUPU' MENES - Tumbadora, Bongo, Chekere** : Born in Matanzas, Cuba, Pupi began his musical career playing drumset in Miami in the 60's. He continued playing drums in a rock band called 'Ocean' before shifting to percussion to play with great Cuban sonero Ruben Gonzalez. Since then he has become a fixture of the New Orleans Latin scene, playing with many popular acts including: Santiago, Caliente, Elegant Gypsy, Pedro Cruz Band, Acoustic Swiftmess, and others. He also toured and recorded with funk band Smilin' Myron. Pupi is currently a member of Fredy Omar con su Banda and a jazz group called Two Pan Sam.

**ROB BLOCK - Piano** : Rob moved to New Orleans in March, 2002, with his wife Tomoko, also an accomplished piano player, and baby daughter Mimava. Residing previously in St. Louis, he spent ten years teaching in the Jazz Department at Webster University, performing at the Adams Mark Hotel as artist in residence, and as musical director for 'El Caribe Tropical'. He performed for many years with St. Louis legend Willie Atkins as well as touring and recording with organ greats - Richard 'Groove' Holmes and Charles Earland. An in-demand guitarist as well as piano player, Rob currently performs with Hot Club of New Orleans, Ian McPhail Quintet, David Torkanowski's 'Organism', Wendel Brunius and New Orleans Street Beat.

**CRISTOBAL 'EL CANYON' CRUZADO - Timbales** : Cristobal 'El Canyon' Cruzado is a native of Columbia. He has resided in New Orleans for 39 years and has performed with Ruben Gonzales, Grupo Santiago, Peter Toma Band, and Fredy Omar Con Su Banda. He also spent 14 years on Bourbon Street as a member of the Chris Owens house band.

**ERIC LUCERO - Trumpet** : A native of New Mexico via southern California, Eric has been a fixture on the New Orleans music scene for more than ten years. He lends his talents to a variety of bands including Sunpie Barnes and the Louisiana Sunspots, the N.O. premier rock band-Better Than Ezra, the funky soul-jazz group Have Soul Will Travel and the eclectic Naked Orchestra. He also performs straight-ahead jazz with OTRA pianist Rob Block in his quintet. And now you can find him playing with the hard hitting Afro-Cuban Jazz band OTRA....Enjoy!

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## OTRA "TODO PA'LA GENTE"

Release Date:  
April, 2004

### Tracks:

1. Con Otra in New Orleans
2. Candela
3. Ebioso
4. Mid-City Mambo
5. Todo Pa'la Gente
6. Baila Mi Son
7. Nature Boy
8. Loisaída
9. Obatala

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## OUR MUSIC



### OTRA *Todo Pa'la Gente*

This band is all about high-octane, full-throttle, positive energy musical explorations. The Afro-Cuban/Latin jazz hybrid created by Otra has made them a favorite on the Frenchmen Street club scene, and *Todo Pa'la Gente* does a remarkable job of harnessing the band's live energy into a recording that can be enjoyed in one's living room. In fact, this reviewer would even be so bold as to declare this album as an essential inclusion in any and all future house parties. What makes Otra special is their ability to play as one and subvert all ego - Otra music is a finely concocted blend of timbales, congas, bass, percussive piano lines and trumpet and sax leads that weave in and out of each other like the fabric of a finely stitched Oaxacan shirt. Tunes like "Mid-City" and "Loisaída" are utterly infectious and original while they pay homage to influences like Eddie Palmieri and Jerry Gonzales and the Ft. Apache Band. Even if you don't know a damn thing about this genre of music, this album is worth checking out and should make an otherworldly improvement to your music collection.

—Billy Thinner, *Where Y'At Magazine*, June 2004

### OTRA: *Todo Pa'la Gente* (Independent)

Afro-Cuban bands are multiplying exponentially of late. That doesn't mean any of them are any good. Throwing a conga player in the mix and faking one's way through a cha cha cha does not quite fit the bill. Amidst this sea of half-assed fumbling imitators comes the refreshingly ambitious sextet Otra.

Their debut release *Todo Pa'la Gente* is brimming with not only the essential boogaloo rhythms, but with impressively complex melodies. It's the compositional and melodic element that is what is lacking in most neo-Latin jazz ensembles, and it is where Otra separates itself from the pack. Not content to take the easy way out with Tito Puente and Buena Vista Social Club covers, Otra finds inspiration in their own creations. The album's opener "Con Otra In New Orleans" exemplifies the band's compositional fortitude. Beginning with a percussion/chant intro, the band slowly folds in Rob Block's piano until finally exploding into a soaring horn-blasting chorus. Block is actually responsible for four of the record's nine tracks, and each one delivers in spades. "Candela" (not to be confused with the Buena Vista Social Club tune of the same name) is an album highlight with its lyrical, weaving melody, as is the dance floor beckoning sway of "Baila Mi Son". The playing throughout is first-rate, starting with the relentless rhythmic attack of conga player Pupi Menes and Cristobal Cruzado's timbales. The mingling of Eric Lucero's trumpet and Brent Rose's saxophone is seamless while bassist and leader Sam Price holds down a steady but intriguing bottom. Other album highlights include the Latin jazz makeover of the jazz standard "Nature Boy" and the hand-clap breaks and snaky horn solos of the *orisha*-inspired "Ebioso". Unlike many other "Latin" jazz dance bands, Otra brings a passion and dedication to the ever-expanding genre. Simply put, they just get it.

—Christopher Blagg, *Offbeat Magazine*, July 2004

### OTRA: *Todo Pa'la Gente* (Independent)

One of the nicest surprises on the New Orleans music scene the last two years has been the emergence of the Afro-Cuban jazz band OTRA. Founded by the eclectic bassist Sam Price (a force behind the bluegrass band Uptown Okra as well), OTRA serves the primal function of a Latin band: playing music for dancing your butt off. Two rhythm section veterans, the Cuban conguero Pupi Menes and the Columbian timbalero Cristobal Cruzado, guarantee that.

Unlike many bands that might be lumped together in the "salsa" category, however, OTRA's appeal extends beyond its rhythmic allure. A good deal of credit for this must go to the band's keyboard player, Rob Block. An East Coast native who lived in St. Louis for 10 years before moving to New Orleans two years ago, he is a modern jazz wizard as well as master of Afro-Cuban styles (and if that isn't enough he's a killer guitarist, too). Block composed five of the CD's nine tracks, and in addition to his wonderful playing and writing, he has a knack for keeping the horn charts interesting and for providing fine backing for hornmen Eric Lucero and Brent Rose. Much of this has to do with avoiding that most dreaded of latin music devices (for the non-dancing listener anyway), the endless one-or two chord montuno.

In addition to the Block originals, *Todo Pa'la Gente* contains two traditional melodies, paeans to the Cuban "orishas" or spirits arranged by Price, and a jazz standard, "Nature Boy." It's a well-rounded program fit for musicologists and booty-shakers alike.

—Tom McDermott, *Gambit Weekly*, May 18 2004 - CD Reviews

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## PRESS

### LATIN MUSIC

Bassist Andrew Wolf, left, and Sam Price lead Los Vecinos and Otra, respectively, two local ensembles at the vanguard of a revitalized Latin music scene. Within the progressive-minded Otra, Price and a band that features saxophone, trumpet, piano, bass and percussion use traditional Cuban rhythms - cha cha cha, mambo, rumba, boogaloo - as a jumping-off point for jazzier explorations, as evidenced on Otra's new debut CD, *"Todo Pa'la Gente."* "We're not reinventing the wheel - Latin jazz has been around since the 1940s," Price says. "But we like to think that we put our own spin on it." "But we like to think that we put our own spin on it." Wolf's Los Vecinos adheres more closely to the tenets of traditional folkloric Cuban music on a program of standards and some originals. Melodic and rhythmic instruments - acoustic bass, two acoustic guitars, a flute, two saxophones and percussion - interlock in tight arrangements overlaid with Spanish vocals on Los Vecinos' 2002 release "Pa'qui, Pa'la." The music of both Otra and Los Vecinos is highly conducive to dancing.

-Sound Advice, *Times-Picayune*, "Lagniappe", June 4, 2004



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### El Grupo "Otra" Presenta Su CD Por Carlos Flores

El centro nocturno "BLUE NILE" en 534 Frenchmen Street, en New Orleans, tuvo el honor de presentar al grupo "OTRA", los que en un ambiente de mucho baile y alegría y en un centro nocturno completamente lleno, presentaron su primer CD, "TODO PA'LA GENTE". El show tuvo a la gente bailando hasta altas horas de la madrugada y los invitados tuvieron el placer de compartir un delicioso plato de arroz con pollo y frijoles guisados que estuvo muy delicioso.

La banda esta integrada por los músicos siguientes: Director, compositor, arreglos y bajo, Sr. Sam Price (U. S. A.), compositor, arreglos y pianista, Sr. Robert Block (U. S. A.), saxofon y flauta, Sr. Brent Rose (U. S. A.) trompeta, Eric Lucero (Mexico Americano), timbales, Sr. Cristobal Cruzado (Colombia), y Tumbadoras, Sr. Humberto (Pupi) Menes (Cuba).

Los invitados comenzaron a llegar a la fiesta de presentación como a las 10:30 y las 11:30 el lugar estaba totalmente abarrotado. Los presentes motivados por la musica caliente de "OTRA" bailaron sin parar durante la presentación del grupo. El centro nocturno en esa noche conto con la presencia de una gran variedad de personajes del norte y sur America.

Refiriendome al CD presentado esa noche por el Grupo "OTRA" puedo decirles que se trata de un disco en el que se manifiestan los ritmos tropicales del Caribe con un legitimo sabor afro-cubano que en conjunto con la influencia del Jazz americano nos introducen en un mundo musical de salsa en Jazz muy dificil de escuchar sin sentir el deseo de bailar.

Esta obra musical es el resultado de la composicion y arreglos propios de la banda. El disco es una pieza digna de poseer.

- Vocero News, May 7, 2004

### THE "OTHER" BAND

Maybe the newest Latin band on the strip is an Afro-Cuban jazz band, Otra, which translates in English to "other." Unlike many of the Latin bands in New Orleans, Otra looked for fresh blood when it formed, adopting two newcomers to the city, pianist Rob Block and timbales player Steve Reichlen. Rounding out the ensemble are veterans Brent Rose on saxophone, Bob Garrett on trumpet, and Cuban born percussionist Pupi Menes. Their style is not confined to one specific rhythm or dance, but is an amalgam of several. Says Price, "I'm not trying to reproduce a sound. I try to weave different elements together...I have a great respect for the history of this music and the variety of rhythmic styles, which you really do

have to learn in order to internalize them, but I'm not trying to fit any specific style within the Afro-Cuban genre." When asked if he considers it a problem that there is only one true Latino in a band playing Latin music, Price acknowledges this disparity saying, "In recent weeks I *have* noticed more Latino couples dancing at our shows, but I'm glad we have a true Cubano in Pupi." In fact, while there are several Latino musicians playing in the various ensembles, most of the bands playing Latin music on Frenchmen Street are made up of primarily white musicians, and the audiences for all the shows are also overwhelmingly Anglo. Does it take away from the authenticity of these "Latin" bands? Yolanda Estrada doesn't think so. She champions bands such as Otra, Los Vecinos and Son Del Pantano regularly on her weekly radio show. "As long as it's getting out there, I don't care who plays it," says Estrada. Concerning the largely white audience patrolling the clubs on Frenchmen she asserts, "Music is the international language. You don't have to understand what they're saying to enjoy it."

-Offbeat Magazine, Dec. 2002

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## PERFORMANCES

### CLUBS:

*Tipitina's*  
*House of Blues*  
*Snug Harbor*  
*The Blue Nile*  
*Cafe Brasil*  
*Funky Butt*  
*The Dragon's Den*  
*The Maple Leaf*  
*dba*  
*The Spotted Cat*  
*Cafe Negril*  
*307 Jazz and Blues*- Lafayette, La.

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sam price bass    brent rose saxophone  
 eric lucero trumpet    rob block piano  
 humber to 'pupi' menez    timbadora bongos, chekere  
 cristobal 'el canyon' cruzado timbales

saturday  
 october 3  
 CAFÉ BRASIL  
 2100 Chartres  
 504.449.0851  
 @10:30 pm

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### FESTIVALS / EVENTS:

*New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival* - 2003, 2004, 2005  
*Downtown Live* - Lafayette, La.

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### OTRA appears with



Los Vecinos  
 Saturday  
 June 5 at  
 Tipitina's,  
 10pm

### OTHER DATES IN JUNE:

Sat 12:  
 Blue Nile, 10:30pm  
 Tue 29: dba, 10pm

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### FEATURING THEIR NEW RELEASE



'TODO PA'LA GENTE'  
 -AVAILABLE NOW-

4/21 10:00 PM	D.B.A
4/22 11:00 PM	CAFÉ BRASIL
4/23 10:00 PM	A MOTHERSHIP ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION AT THE BIG TOP
4/24 11:00 PM	THE DRAGON'S DEN
4/29 4:30 PM	JAZZ FEST - LAGNIAPPE STAGE
11:00 PM	CAFÉ NEGRIL
5/02 10:00 PM	THE SPOTTED CAT
5/15 3:00 PM	L.A. MUSIC FACTORY IN-STORE PERFORMANCE
5/15 5:00 PM	STORYVILLE JAZZ PARLOR
5/15 10:30 PM	CAFÉ BRASIL
5/20 9:00 PM	JAZZ PARLOR
5/21 5:30 PM	DOWNTIME LIVE SERIES, LAFAYETTE, LA
5/21 9:30 PM	307 JAZZ & BLUES CLUB, LAFAYETTE, LA

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