

Al Di Meola - Casino (1978)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 14 May 2010 12:08 - Last Updated Monday, 14 July 2014 08:09

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01. *Egyptian Danza (Al Di Meola)* – 5:54
02. *Chasin' The Voodoo (Mingo Lewis)* – 5:03
03. *Dark Eye Tango (Al Di Meola)* – 5:22
04. *Señor Mouse (Chick Corea)* – 7:18
05. *Fantasia Suite For Two Guitars (Al Di Meola)* – 5:09 including:
 - a. *Viva La Danzarina*
 - b. *Guitars Of The Exotic Isle*
 - c. *Rhapsody Italia*
 - d. *Bravoto Fantasia*
06. *Casino (Al Di Meola)* – 9:27

Personnel:

- Al Di Meola - electric guitar (01,02,03,04,05,06), mandolin (05), castanets (05), foot stamps (05), hand claps (05), congas (05), bongos (05)
- Anthony Jackson - bass (01,02,03,04,06)
- Barry Miles - electric piano (01,02,03,04,06), minimoog (01,02,03,04), Yamaha organ (01,02,03,04,06), acoustic piano (01,02,03,04,06), marimba (02,06)
- Steve Gadd - drums (01,02,03,04,06)
- James Mingo Lewis - congas (02,03,04,06), bongos (03,04,06)
- Eddie Colon - timbales & roto toms (06)

Following up the superb *Elegant Gypsy* was no mean feat, but Al di Meola gave it his best shot with the similarly styled *Casino*, released in 1978. Featuring a core band of Steve Gadd, Anthony Jackson, and Barry Miles (whom di Meola came up with before the guitarist was invited to join *Return to Forever*), the playing is sharp and fiery, matching the youthful intensity of the leader. di Meola is a good composer in the fusion idiom, and the four original compositions on *Casino*, although clearly bearing the mark of Chick Corea's influence, are strong. His "Fantasia Suite for Two Guitars," featuring di Meola accompanying himself via multi-tracking, is beautiful

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and dramatic, and hints at the guitarist's later all-acoustic works such as Friday Night in San Francisco. "Dark Eye Tango" opens with a slow theme before turning into an uptempo vehicle for di Meola's darting Les Paul. In fact, it is the leader's solos that frequently prevent the Latin grooves and rhythms found on Casino from sounding stale and a bit dated. His trademark staccato phrasing and high-velocity improvisations are what is noticed upon first listen, but di Meola does have an excellent sense of phrasing that is undeniably present. Contrary to popular opinion, he knows how to use his technique to good effect. Casino is not as strong as either Elegant Gypsy or Romantic Warrior, but is nevertheless well worth picking up for fans either of di Meola himself or of the entire 1970s fusion scene. --Daniel Gioffre, Rovi

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