

Omara Portuondo – Flor De Amor (2004)

Written by bluelover

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01. Tabu 02. Amor De Mis Amores 03. Alma De Roca 04. Mueve La Cintura, Mulato
05. Junto A Un Canaveral 06. Hermosa Habana 07. El Madrugador 08. Amorosa Guajira
09. Habanera Ven 10. Si Llego A Besarte 11. Flor De Amor 12. Juramento 13. He Venido A
Decirte 14. Casa Calor

Flor de Amor is the second World Circuit outing for Cuban diva Omara Portuondo, whose debut for the label topped the world music charts in 2000. This time out, Portuondo and producers Nick Gold, Jerry Boys, and Alé Siqueira assemble a sultry, steamy, and extremely elegant collection of love songs that are steeped in the popular Cuban bolero, rhumba, ritmo, guajira, and mambo traditions, but there is also the airiness of Brazilian pop music in the tunes produced by Siqueira. The players are from three generations of Cuban studio musicians, and include Barbarito Torres, Orlando "Cachaito" Lopez, Manuel Galbán, Roberto Fonseca, Carlos Emilio, and dozens of others, with a few Anglo players and singers as well. This is one of the most elegant recordings to come from the Buena Vista Social Club set. The album opens with the ethereal "Tabú." It is a song of longing for Africa with a gorgeous clarinet line played by Javier Zalba and a wispy backing chorus that winds around Portuondo; she blends in a Yoruban spiritual chant without breaking stride or upsetting the nocturnal balance of the tune. Jorge Chicoy's trademark electric guitar sound graces many of these tunes, with none so beautiful as "Amor de Mis Amores" ("Love of my life/Lifeblood of my veins/Give me the bloom of hope/Let me tell you the bittersweet truth/Of my suffering..."), with its chorus and entwining guitars and percussion. The classic "Amorosa Guajira" is haunting and tender; it features the singer accompanied only by Papi Oviedo's 12-string. The closing cut is written in Portuguese by Brazilian pop star Carlinhos Brown along with Junior Costa. Portuondo rises to the occasion, and sings this samba-inspired ballad with aplomb -- there is even a subtle theremin line by producer Siqueira! Flor de Amor is a wonderfully seamless, sensually charged, slow burn of an album that is nothing short of a work of art. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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