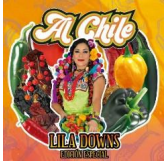


Lila Downs □ – Al Chile (2020)

Written by bluelover (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

Tuesday, 25 August 2020 12:46 - Last Updated Tuesday, 25 August 2020 13:01

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1 *Las Marmotas* 2 *La Campanera* 3 *Cariñito* 4 *Dear Someone* *Featuring* – Norah Jones 5 *Clandestino* 6 *Dos Botellas de Mezcal* 7 *La San Marqueña* 8 *Sé Feliz* *Featuring* – Gepe 9 *Son Del Chile Frito* 10 *Los Caminos de la Vida* 11 *La Llorona* 12 *Cariñito (Mexican Institute Of Sound Mix)* *Featuring* – Panteón Rococó 13 *Tiembla* 14 *La Cumbia Del Mole* 15 *Querido Alguien (Dear Someone)* *Featuring* – Norah Jones 16 *Son de Ejutla* *Accordion* – Ángel Pedraza de Grupo Kual (tracks: 1) *Accordion, Vocals* – Ángel Pedraza de Grupo Kual (tracks: 2, 5) *Band* – Banda Misteriosa de Oaxaca (tracks: 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 13, 16), Banda de Jóvenes de CEMXHA (tracks: 8), Costa Azul (tracks: 10, 13), La Misteriosa (tracks: 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15), La Sonora Tropicana (tracks: 1, 2, 3, 5) *Guitar* – Sostenes Mancera Xolalpa (tracks: 14) *Guitar, Synth* – Marco Carrión (tracks: 1) *Jarana* – José Manuel Jiménez Reza (tracks: 5) *Keyboards* – Camilo Lara (tracks: 13), Joaquín Rosendo Campero "Pelón" (tracks: 13), Lauro López Hernández (tracks: 14), Marco Carrión (tracks: 13) *Mellotron* – Camilo Lara (tracks: 4, 15) *Percussion* – Oscar "La Vaca" Rojas (tracks: 2, 10) *Piano* – Norah Jones (tracks: 4, 15) *Saxophone* – Missa* (tracks: 12), Yair Noé Cruz (tracks: 5, 7, 9) *Timbales* – Ricardo López Ponce (tracks: 14) *Trombone* – Hiram Arencibia Rodríguez (tracks: 3, 10), Paco (tracks: 12) *Trumpet* – Ignacio Soriano Martínez (tracks: 7, 9), Juan Alejandro González Villaseñor (tracks: 4, 8, 15) *Vihuela* – José Manuel Jiménez Reza (tracks: 4, 8, 15), Juan Alejandro González Villaseñor (tracks: 5) *Vocals* – Shenka (tracks: 12)

For two decades, Mexican-American singer/songwriter Lila Downs has showcased the various musical styles of her two nations, presenting a global approach to the music of the Americas. Born in Oaxaca and raised there and in Minnesota, Downs has spent her career underscoring the differences between Latino and Anglo cultures, and celebrating them holistically through musical styles ranging from cumbias, mariachis, and rancheras to jazz, folk, hip-hop, and blues in a variety of languages including Mixtec, English, Spanish, and Zapotec, among others. *Al Chile* was recorded over a year in Mexico City, Brooklyn, Oaxaca, and on a farm in Juchitán de Zaragoza. Musically, it is simultaneously a logical extension of her ambitious vision, and a striking new direction. Produced by Camilo Lara (Mexican Institute of Sound) and mixed by Mario Caldato, Jr. (Beastie Boys), the record's sounds reach deeper into urban Latin pop without forsaking their folk roots. More than 180 musicians participated in these sessions

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including several regional orchestra like the 176-piece Banda Misteriosa de Oaxaca, a band devoted to rhythmic and harmonic invention. Norah Jones and Chilean singer Gepe (Daniel Alejandro Riveros Sepúlveda) also guest.

Comprised of originals and covers, the album's second single, "Clandestino," was penned and recorded by Manu Chao during the '90s; it's a fine example of the musical flavors at work here. Downs' reading is a protest of current U.S. immigration policies, delivered from a feminine perspective -- a mother's. She keeps the original lyrics that depict people living like outlaws because they lack documentation, then ad-libs with real pain: "If we're not going to take care of our children, who will?" Downs takes the reggae backdrop of Chao's original and transforms it into an electro cumbia as Lara adds dubwise elements to bridge the gap. Another single, a reading of the Peruvian classic "Carinito" by Ángel Aníbal Rosado was recorded with La Sonora Tropicana and La Banda Misteriosa de Oaxaca; it combines joyous cumbia with chichi and mariachi. There are two versions of "Dear Someone" by Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, with Jones duetting with Downs. Transformed into a mournful, passionate ranchera duet, it is presented in Spanish and English. Gepe duets with Downs on the immortal ballad "Se Feliz," adorned with subtle loops, ringing, phase-shifted guitars, and glorious mariachi horns. The traditional "La Llorna" is one of the most original takes ever recorded thanks to its martial snares, waltz tempo, and passionate vocal framed by the expansive harmonic reach of Banda de Jóvenes de CEMXHA. Of Downs' originals, "Son del Chile Frito" is a swirling cumbia criss-crossed with hip-hop, while "La Marmotas" is a funky, rhumba-tinged cumbia. The set-closer "Dos Botellas de Mezcal" is a polka played by a conjunto norteño augmented by fat, bright winds, reeds, and brass, sending the entire recording out on a celebratory note. Al Chile is one of Downs' most ambitious recordings; thanks to the selection of Lara as producer, it's also the among the most enjoyable. More than likely given its flavor, diversity, and reflection of the times we currently live in, it will resonate in rural pueblos and urban plazas simultaneously. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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