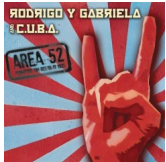


Rodrigo y Gabriela with C.U.B.A - Area 52 (2012)



1. *Santo Domingo* 2. *Hanuman* 3. *Ixtapa* 4. *11:11* 5. *Master Maqui* 6. *Diablo Rojo*
7. *Logos* [play](#) 8. *Juan Loco* [play](#) 9. *Tamacun* Personnel : Rodrigo Y Gabriela
Alex Wilson - piano C.U.B.A.

The Mexican guitar heroes have moved on, in style. On the last couple of occasions I've seen Rodrigo y Gabriela, they were technically brilliant but repetitive, relying too much on rapid-fire riffs and guitar noodling. Their last studio album, *11:11*, showed them exploring added instrumentation, and now comes their most unexpected work to date, a classy, varied and upbeat set in which Rodrigo Sanchez and Gabriela Quintero are joined by a 13-piece Cuban orchestra featuring members of Los Van Van, and guests from around the world, including the Indian sitar star Anoushka Shankar and Palestinian oud virtuosos Le Trio Joubran. It's a brave new approach from a duo who have enjoyed an extraordinary career, playing heavy metal in Mexico City before switching to acoustic guitars and mixing Latin, rock and jazz influences into their compositions, then moving to Dublin as buskers before touring the world and selling more than 1m albums. They are helped here by the veteran producer Peter Asher and pianist/arranger Alex Wilson, a specialist in Latin and African styles, who provided orchestral arrangements that still allow room for elaborate guitar solos. There is no new material, but rather a complete re-working of instrumental pieces that appeared on their first and latest studio albums.

Tunes such as *Tamacun* may seem over-worked (after all, it appeared on their debut set, then on two of their live albums) but here it is transformed thanks to the tight, attacking brass work. Elsewhere there's a salsa-flavoured treatment of *Hanuman*, and a new version of *Ixtapa* that eases from Spain to India (thanks to a fine solo from Shankar) and on to Cuban jazz. Then there's the slow and drifting *Logos*, helped by the bass work of Spain's flamenco and jazz virtuoso Carles Benavent, and a treatment of *11:11* that switches from Pink Floyd-influenced guitar work to Cuban folk song. An impressive departure – just when it was needed. ---Robin Denselow, guardian.co.uk

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