

Press Reviews

CBC Radio One

Metro Morning

Monday March 1st 2004

Produced by: Garvia Bailey



Juan Valencia of Plan C, supports CHRY in the Fundrive Media Launch—09/17/04.

Three prominent members of Toronto's independent arts community plea for the continued support of Fresh Air in community radio.

By Jess Lilley.

In a time when so much media is vying for the public's attention, you could be forgiven for presuming that community radio might run the risk of being the most marginalized. After all, it appears to have the least clout in an increasingly commercialized and saturated marketplace.

But then talk to any independent artist and you quickly realize the opposite is true for a huge and thriving fringe culture in Canada. Moreover, its mere existence is a definitive sign of the medium's success—in a truly democratic indication of its popularity, public radio can only survive with the financial support of its listeners.

Which is precisely why a community minded bunch of Torontonians gathered at York University on Friday morning to launch CHRY's annual Fundraising Drive, which gets underway on Saturday September 25. Guest speakers included five-time Grammy Award nominee, Dr. Rob Bowman; JUNO award winning artist Denise Jones; and award winning Colombian musician and producer, Juan Carlos Valencia.

They each delivered a unique perspective on the importance of community radio and how it has contributed to their own successes; as well as their love for independent music, media and the arts.

Currently working as a Professor in Ethnomusicology at York University, Bowman has himself worked as an announcer on countless public radio stations (including CHRY) in both Canada and the USA—beginning some three decades ago at WEVL in Memphis. He credited WEVL with initiating a lifelong musical exploration that culminated in his 1996 Grammy Award for Best Album Notes for *The Complete Stax/Volt Soul Singles, Vol. 3: 1972-1975*.

"I heard this station and it was mind blowing—I hadn't heard radio like this before."

However his initial journey as an announcer was cut short when WEVL ran into financial difficulty and temporarily closed down. Bowman cautioned that community radio stations like CHRY can never take fundraising for granted.

A common issue raised by all three speakers was the role of community radio in an otherwise monocultural industry. According to Bowman, in comparison to commercial stations, "community radio can go much deeper", delivering a much more diverse and global range of music and culture.

Denise Jones told the story of making the conscious decision early in her career to strike an independent path when she arrived in Toronto as an actress in 1987.

"Damned if I was going to always play the prostitute," she said of the typecasting that was frustrating her attempts to build a fulfilling career. So she struck out on her own, developing her own production company and soliciting more

diverse scripts. Without the media support she received from stations like CHRY, Jones wondered whether she would have ever been able to develop a career that saw her named one of the Toronto Star's "People With Clout" in the Entertainment Industry. She also emphasized the independent role CHRY plays as a news broadcaster, tackling issues that are deemed too controversial for many commercial news outlets.

This was a theme Juan Carlos Valencia also touched on. He claims that some of the social and political content covered by his band Plan-C has often led to them being overlooked by commercial media. Without community radio, he doubts his music would have ever reached such a large audience, resulting in Plan-C becoming this year's winners of Canadian Music Week's Favorite Latin Alternative Group. He also paid tribute to the influence Toronto's vibrant community radio scene has had on his own music.

"Coming to Toronto and listening to community radio, I was exposed to a lot of great music that I wouldn't be able to listen to back home," he said. It allowed him to develop his music in ways he'd never previously imagined. "Not just individual bands, but also underground musical movements can't grow without community radio—like the alternative Latin movement."

The combined message of these three speakers was a powerful call to action for all lovers of independent news, music, arts and culture in Toronto. Jones ended with the heartfelt plea that, "it is imperative that we continue to support CHRY." While Valencia spoke on behalf of many musicians when he said: "If you guys survive, we survive. If you don't survive, we don't survive at all."

CHRY's 17th annual Fundrive celebrates its specialist programming with the theme Fresh Air. They'll be asking loyal listeners to pledge financial support for the station, with the enticement of station-branded gifts. There are also main prize drawers, with prizes including trips to the Caribbean.



Check out a short Video Clip showcased by SVP Television at the Distillery Jazz Festival 2004.

THIS BUSINESS OF DANCE & MUSIC

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PLAN C – A New Sound in Latin Music

So what's a new wave in global, Latin domination look and sound like? Well, on Halloween, they'd be dressed as zombies fronted by a little female devil. The host would be the red and lovely acoustic ambience of Lula Lounge, Toronto.

Their flyers boast a 'new wave of global Latin sound' mixing electronica and Afro-Latin rhythms. Truly, the club-hopper or the music lover cannot be afraid of international rhythms or think that one shouldn't cross the other when attending a Plan C show. Nor should they be surprised when the dancers stop to watch and listen and the music patrons get up and dance. This band is an orchestra of big sounds and big ambitions with the subtle details required in the plying of Latin, African and block, rockin' beats. The mastermind behind the mix of styles is the producer/composer/singer/band leader, Juan Carlos Valencia, tapping into the variety of musical tastes from himself and his band-mates.

"When we get together all our influences start to surface and meld together," says guitarist, Alberto Campuzano.

The Halloween fest started with an instrumental, electro-latino-alternativo version of Michael Jackson's Thriller. Juan followed this with a boisterous welcome, launching the room into their second song. The dancers took to the floor and the music-lovers sat back. Newcomers to the Plan C show might not have noticed the tiny, young lady climbing onto the stage, discretely making her way towards her place, centre-stage -- until she added her voice to the music. Janelle Dewhurst's vocal range and beauty is a powerhouse, elegant and sensuous yet strong enough to hold itself against her vocal counterpart, Juan, and the rest of the eight-man band. The Cumbia song was my favourite. My first thought was that Juan looked too young to sing that song so well. Just as, my first thought was that Janelle looked too small to carry the Techno number that had the room jumpin'.

It's not enough to say that this emerging band is uniquely Canadian or Latin or from Toronto's prominent music program at Humber College. This band has taken the time to selectively cut and serve the samples of sounds from across the world and more importantly, their own influences. Something to freshen our over- saturated, urban palates. Let's take the time to savour the details.

Aside from regular performances at Lula's, Plan C has played at the Harbourfront Centre, Bambu by the Lake, Guelph University and Humber College. They will be playing at the next Montreal Jazz festival.

Plan C's next upcoming show will be at Lula's on November 28th, 2003.

<http://thisbusinessofdanceandmusic.com/PlanCReview.htm>

Conociendo un poco más de: PLAN C

Música Alter-Latina, fusionando lo tradicional con lo moderno

Cuando yo pienso en la música latina alternativa siempre pienso en música que es consciente de la tradición original de nuestra música. Pienso en música que aprende del pasado y desde ahí empieza a moverse a los ritmos modernos. La música alter-latina es una combinación de mucho más que tambores tradicionales con guitarras roqueras. La música alter-latina es el conocimiento del deseo y pasión que trajo la música latina a Norte América. Estamos hablando de música que sabe mezclar las ondas de Cumbia y Salsa con las ondas de rock y las ondas electrónicas de hoy día. Estamos hablando de música que es consciente de la lucha y gozo de nuestros países maternos. Cuando pienso en la música alter-latina, pienso en Plan C.

El viernes 28 de noviembre 2003 en Lula lounge se presentó por la última vez este año el grupo fabuloso de Juan Carlos Valencia y su familia musical Plan C. Cuando uno escucha (o sale a bailar) la música de Plan C, uno reconoce los ritmos de salsa y cumbia, pero también uno aprecia el uso de la guitarra de rock, o de el DJ que trae una onda de la música electrónica house. Pero no para ahí, sino uno puede apreciar cuando le agregan un sentido fuerte de la música de funk y soul. Dando el espectáculo una combinación de sonidos complicados, pero integrados en una manera que no es desordenada, sino mezclado perfectamente para nuestra diversión. Cuando está escribiendo la música de Plan C, Juan Carlos siempre está consciente de cada miembro de su familia musical. "Cada persona aporta, cada persona aporta sus cosas," Cuenta Juan. "y de ahí uno conoce la persona, y de ahí uno empieza a escribir para esa persona."

"Juan es el jefe," cuenta el pianista Chris Moulder. " él entiende la capacidad de toda la gente en la banda, y sabe el sonido que quiere encontrar, que está buscando, y de ahí va escribiendo." En una calle desconocida en la mente de Juan Carlos se encontraron el rock y la cumbia. La salsa y el electrónico. Se enamoraron, y de ahí nació la música de Plan C. Un grupo más ecléctico no vas a encontrar. Una canción puede ser cumbia-reggae, la próxima puede ser salsa jazz-funk. Hasta las canciones mismas empiezan en un ritmo y terminan en otro. La música de Plan C no tiene miedo de ser todo lo que tiene que ser para ser considerado un grupo alter-latino. Algunos grupos encuentran una combinación de ritmos y paran ahí, pero Plan C siempre sigue mirando hasta el futuro cambiando y creciendo juntos como una familia musical.

Ya van peleando juntos por un gran tiempo, buscando el respeto que se merecen siendo un grupo de músicos alter-latinos en la ciudad de Toronto.

"La música alternativa lleva menos de diez años. Se tiene que empezar por algún lado," dice Juan. "Lo bueno es que esta música es internacional. No solo es para una comunidad. Y eso es lo que estoy tratando de hacer con Plan C. Llegar no solo a latinos sino a todo el mundo." Plan C está planeando regresar al estudio los próximos tres meses para grabar su nuevo disco, por eso el espectáculo del viernes pasado fue tan especial. Empujando con su propio sello, Juan Carlos planea sacar el disco en el nuevo año.

Como muchos de los grupos luchando hoy día para el respeto de la comunidad latina, Plan C piensa que le falta mucho para que pegue esta nueva onda. "A mi me parece que la gente no sabe que existe esto, lo que es latino alternativa" dice Chris Moulder. "No saben de donde vinimos, del estilo de nuestra onda. "Y tiempo también." dice Juan Carlos. "La filosofía es seguir trabajando poco a poco, y seguir tocando y seguir llegando a más gente."

Plan C no solo necesita nuestro apoyo, ellos se merecen nuestro respecto por ser un grupo sin miedo de experimentar y fusionar todos los ritmos latinos tradicionales con los ritmos modernos de la nueva generación. Plan C toca la música de la juventud y abraza la música de la generación de nuestros padres. La música alter-latino es la nueva onda del día, pero no es una onda que va a morir pronto. Con grupos como Plan C basando la música de la nueva generación en la música tradicional latina, la nueva onda solo puede seguir creciendo de semillas llenas de tanta vida, alegría y gozo.

<http://www.torontohispano.com/columnas/conociendoa/planc/main.shtml>