

Los Amigos Invisibles deliver Latin funky fun

Band's follow-up album mixes energy with emotion



Arepa 3000

Los Amigos Invisibles. Universal Music Pub.

★★★★☆

By Josh Ryneal
Oregon Daily Emerald

The traditional Latin rhythms, instruments and vocals of Cuban artists such as those on the album "Buena Vista Social Club" and the Afro-Cuban All Stars' "A Toda Cuba Le Gusta" were big hits in the States when these albums were released in 1997 and 1999, respectively. Copies flew off the shelves into the hands of record buyers who had never heard, much less bought, a world music album before, while critics praised the resurrection of a forgotten genre.

Despite the fact that the lyrics were all in Spanish, people fell in love with the warmth and emotion

of the music even though the words, to some, were indecipherable.

Los Amigos Invisibles attempt to tap the same audience that bought the above two albums with their new CD, "Arepa 3000." Released on David Byrne's world-music Luaka Bop label, "Arepa 3000" features Spanish lyrics and Latin rhythms, but that's where the obvious similarities end.

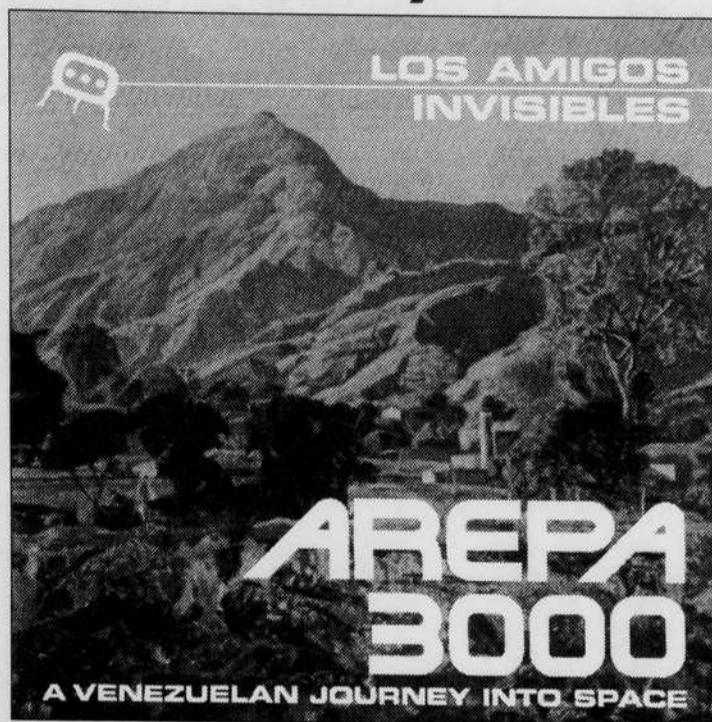
Calling themselves a "dance band," Los Amigos Invisibles use live instruments combined with big-beat house production to create a salsa-infused blend of traditional music and sweaty disco funk. Thumping bass and electronic effects mixed with congas, Latin guitar and keyboards make a pleasing booty-shaking stew equally at home on your discman or at your party.

"Arepa 3000" spans many genres, from the Santana-flavored "Cuchi-Cuchi" to the joyous club atmosphere of "Amor" (a cover of a 1980 Latin dance hit) to the new-wave "El Barro," yet never loses the Latin foundations that made traditional Cuban albums so popu-

lar. "Amor," a should-be single propelled by a bass-heavy beat and infectious synth, will blow up any dance floor, while oddities such as "Pipi," with its electric groan, handclaps and upbeat organ, still retain their flavor and charm after repeated listening.

The Amigos' last album, "The New Sound of the Venezuelan Gozadera," was a hipster retro-lounge affair, and some songs on "Arepa 3000" share this sensibility despite its funky new direction. "Si Estuverias Aqui" is an ethereal slow jam whose airy vocals and instrumentation are grounded only by an Afro-Cuban backbeat, and "Domingo Echao" sounds like an Afro-Cuban All Star track updated with a dreamy 1960s "dah dah dah" chorus.

For the most part, the tracks on "Arepa 3000" have a down-and-dirty feel that lives up to the "dance" in "dance band." Things get a little lewd with "Masturbation Session," a testament to the loneliness of a touring band in which the chorus is the title repeated over and over rather bewil-



deringly.

All in all, "Arepa 3000" is straight Latin-funk fun complete

with weird samples and sexy rhythms that will compel you to shake your hips.

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