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# Sounding Salsa: Performing Latin Music In New York City (Studies In Latin America & Car)



## Synopsis

This ethnographic journey into the New York salsa scene of the 1990s offers detailed accounts of musicians grappling with intercultural tensions and commercial pressures. The author, himself an accomplished salsa musician, examines the organisational structures, recording processes, rehearsing and gigging of salsa bands.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[Washburne] offers a no-holds-barred, insider glimpse at 'how salsa was made' in New York City in the 1990s. By challenging conventional narratives about salsa's development and taking on contentious issues in its history, including drugs, violence and illegitimate business practices, *Sounding Salsa* should make a lot of folks look twice at a critical yet neglected moment in the industry's development. Washburne's ethnography of behind-the-scenes backstories, documented from his own vantage point on the bandstand, is the best quick read I've found on the industry's history and inner workings, supplemented by deep industry knowledge that fills in many ellipses in histories written mainly from the point of view of the consumer/ critic. While it offers musicological explanations on salsa's nuts and bolts technical aspects, such as clave, it's also an accessible guide to newcomers who may have wondered: What are those instruments? And why are all those guys wearing the same suits?" - *IndyWeeks*, 31st December 2008 "Washburne does a good job of

chronicling the second-generation surge of the popular Latin dance music salsa in the US, which occurred in New York City in the 1990s. The author bases his discussion on an impressive ethnographic methodology and on his own involvement with salsa as a performer. He introduces the reader to the major figures in the movement, provides glimpses of the music itself, and describes the broader cultural and sociological issues that affected the art form and its practitioners. The introduction provides a good overview of the historical development of salsa in the 1960s-70s and establishes a context for the discussion that follows." Choice "[Washburne] offers a no-holds-barred, insider glimpse at 'how salsa was made' in New York City in the 1990s. By challenging conventional narratives about salsa's development and taking on contentious issues in its history, including drugs, violence and illegitimate business practices, *Sounding Salsa* should make a lot of folks look twice at a critical yet neglected moment in the industry's development. Washburne's ethnography of behind-the-scenes backstories, documented from his own vantage point on the bandstand, is the best quick read I've found on the industry's history and inner workings, supplemented by deep industry knowledge that fills in many ellipses in histories written mainly from the point of view of the consumer/ critic. While it offers musicological explanations on salsa's nuts and bolts technical aspects, such as clave, it's also an accessible guide to newcomers who may have wondered: What are those instruments? And why are all those guys wearing the same suits?" IndyWeek "Washburne is a very fine and respected jazz trombonist... [*Sounding Salsa*] is a well-researched and assiduously documented work of history, written by an ethnomusicologist with impeccable academic credentials... It would be hard to imagine a person better qualified on the subject... His standing as a professional salsero gives him access to information denied other researchers. And he takes advantage, gleaning enough material to tell a fascinating tale... The book's most illuminating passages center on the musicians' own observations and comments, made directly to Washburne and salted liberally throughout the text. Such intimate reflections would only have been revealed to someone who'd earned their deepest trust and respect--another musician, for instance."-Jazz Notes, Spring 2009 "A professional trombonist, Washburne writes from the vantage point of a practising musician as well as a scholar, offering a dynamic view of salsa as seen from the bandstand over an eighteen-year period during which he played with key orchestras of Tito Puente, Ray Barreto, Celia Cruz, Pete 'El Conde' Rodriguez and Hector Lavoe, among many others... Apart from its undoubted academic merits, the book convinces through its insider-out perspective, incisive and evocative scenarios, and the way analysis and theory are embedded within its ethnography. In six highly readable chapters, the salsa scene in all its richness is described, unpicked, critiqued and celebrated... Washburne has written a book that is as entertaining, informative, and provocative

as it is ground-breaking." Popular Music, May 2009 "Washburne provides a micro-level, ethnographic view...[that] will be of direct interest to folklorists... The book gives a nuts-and-bolts description of what it means to record and perform in a salsa band, and it also relates some inside stories that have become legend to those in the scene... The book really breaks new ground...when Washburne discusses violence, drugs, and gender within the salsa scene... While a range of approaches to salsa can be found in the many works on the subject, very few have offered such a rich insider's perspective. Washburne's book is a welcome addition to the conversation." The Journal of American Folklore, Fall 2009

From India getting into trouble for making sexual comments about bandmembers, musicians getting their instruments jacked on their way out the club, the "Vampire" after hour clubs in NYC, and even how certain vocalists like Frankie Ruiz lacked the respect of musicians, it is a great expose on the lives and issues Salsa musicians face. Very enjoyable.

A non-latino view of the music from the inside. Very scholarly work.

This book was a great insight into the world of being a member of a Latin Band. It can be an eye opener to anyone looking to go into the business of music performance. Like everything, there are ups and downs. Chris Washburn does a great job discussing what being a Latin Band member is all about.

As a participant in part of the time that the book focuses on, My hat goes off to Chris. It's probably one of the best examinations of ANY music genre done. Also in addition whether you be a musician, fan, etc. You will see yourself and be forced to examine your motives for your involvement. It really goes below the surface. Also very nice theory examination of Clave controversies. The book seems to be currently under the radar as I haven't heard much rumbling about it. But I'm sure that that is to come.

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