

RODRIGO Y GABRIELA

THE REGENCY GRAND

APRIL 26, 2007

WISH YOU WERE HERE

On a somewhat incendiary note we segue to the scorching performance Thursday night at the Sold Out show at the Regency Grand of Rodrigo Y Gabriela.



The Island-Life Social Coordinator managed to score Tix months in advance for this astonishing duo who have managed to entirely sell out every single North American gig, with maybe an exception for the Coachella Festival at which they are performing tonight. If you were fortunate to have squeezed into the packed hall Thursday, you really were in for a treat, as these two kids from

Mexico have managed to cross the diamond with the pearl musically, inventing an entirely original, fully matured style entirely their own, much as Joe Satriani, Leo Kottke, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis and a select few and have done.



First off, let us say that some untutored reviewers have pinned the flamenco label on their style, which is about as foolish a judgment as it is unlearned. Flamenco is a style indigenous to Spain, consists of 12-part highly defined, very disciplined structures for each of its established song patterns, and has two major divisions into either accompaniment for song or accompaniment for dance, each with its own highly defined structures as well. The highest exponent of the form comes from a small area of Spain called Andalucia. Comparing the Mexican duo to the Gypsy Kings or Paco di Lucia may sound like flattery, but such comparisons are not informed.

Flamenco employs a periodic finger roll called "*rasquado*" and a sound-board tap called "*golpe*".



Gabriela does employ the *rasquado*, but where a *Solearas*, *Bulerias*, or *Sevillana* uses the ringer-roll to stylistically punch out the end or the beginning of a sequence to dramatic effect, Gabriela employs the *rasquado* as part of the continuous sound of rhythm while including taps, slaps and furious knuckle pounding to add percussion to her rhythm, employing all parts of the hand, not just the thumb. All done at quite incredible speed. Nowhere do the pair do anything like a *farruca*.

That said, the two have captured native Mexican cancion progressions and combined them with -- pause breath -- heavy metal shredding. Yes, the two even did covers of Metallica's *Sandman* and *Orion* (included on their new CD, *Tamacun*), as well as tasty versions of "Wish You Were Here", by Pink Floyd,

and "Stairway to Heaven". Their take on the old Led Zep chestnut was infused with Latin feel and a few nice jazzy chord changes with a B13 thrown in here and there, which revived the one terribly overplayed song.

With all the head-banging -- on nylon string classical guitars no less -- and the metalhead "horns" hand gestures, you would think this stuff would trend to the lowest common denominator, but no, just as the screaming, shirt-throwing, pogo-jumping crowd got really raucous, Rodrigo climbed down to the edge of the stage to toss in a fifteen minute version of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five," that was nearly unrecognizable by the changes in texture.

Gabriela claims that she taught herself how to play music by borrowing the acoustic guitar of her sister's boyfriend and playing along to Led Zeppelin records before joining a Mexican heavy metal band, where she met Rodrigo. Heavy metal is not exactly a way to make pots of money in any country, let alone Mexico, so the two accepted a gig to play sambas and cha chas for American tourists at a seaside bar. Since neither one knew any sambas or waltzes, their repertoire consisting of Pantera, Metallica, Black Sabbath and Death Guild, they just adapted what they knew to acoustic instruments. When asked about their music, Gabriela responded, "Oh, iss traditional Mexican. Very old . . .".

In a sort of fairytale way, the two sold all of their electronic equipment to go visit Europe on a thin promise of a place to stay in Ireland. Like many Irish promises, that one evaporated almost instantaneously upon debarking in Dublin, so they set out to make money by busking on the streets. To their surprise, they succeeded. The Irish, above all else, appreciate a raw deal and sincerity, so the

appreciated pair performed in cafes until wintertime when, not used to European weather, or informed as to geography, they decided to go to Stockholm, ostensibly to find warmer weather.



Along the way, the two developed a propulsive style that borrows from all over the world to make really exciting stuff. There are few, if any, who can simultaneously play percussion as well as rhythm as Gabriela can do, with not a single hand motion wasted producing some kind of sound at every chance, often at 185 bpm. On the accompanying DVD, she and Rodrigo break down for

aspiring guitarist how Tamacun is done, and reveals that finger-roll she does is at least three separate motions with three separate sounds produced at lightning speed. And when she hit that fingerboard, she didn't just lightly tap, she pounded that sucker so that the vibration went through the floor into the chest and rattled the back windows. The shouting, screaming, stomping crowd in the Regency Grand brought the two back for two encores, and at the end, you could see the sweat plastering the hair to the sides of her head, while Rodrigo had to wrap himself with a towel a couple times during performance to keep the arctops dry.

The Blogs are full of adoration for the pair, with at least one containing the entry, "Gabriela, marry me!"

The CD is titled Tamacun, after a character in Mexico who "herds" crocodiles who have found the only unpoisoned pool along a river rendered toxic by industrial pollution. This is a reflection of the pair's commitment to environmental causes, which anyone can note on their website, www.rodgab.com.

Seeing the pair live is Tamacun amped plus ten, as watching what the two and actually seeing them do the impossible is worth the price of standing in line plus some.

The number of youtube.com videos of various performances continues to increase. Last count the number was about 29. Their visit with David Letterman can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5VFWA2YKdo>.

Their American tour has resumed with additions after an unfortunate incident reflective of the Culture of Incompetance in Washington, as Rodrigo was

detained and denied visa entry for over a month by Homeland Insecurity because he happened to have the same name as a noted terrorist.

As requests to perform continue to come in from all over the world, it would be well to try to catch them whenever they appear in your town. Last Blog entries indicate that Mexico would like to see its native children home again, there to be recieved no doubt with triumphant accolades.

There is more stuff about them on the CD/DVD release, so just buy the damn thing -- it was only \$8 from Amazon.com at last check. Do yourself a favor and buy new music and attend a live performance. Music revivifies the blood, stimulates the imagination, improves local economies, cures all manner of ills, livens the spirit, fights back the Darkness and, besides, its good for you.