

February 2009

Where was I?

Now I remember: I was in a hotel room in Palo Alto, California, on the dime of the education grant that is currently keeping me floating. Hotel rooms are always a novelty to me, as is television. I watch it so infrequently that the commercials are a consistently edifying lesson in the state of US popular culture, such as it is, squeezed through the fiber optic lines.

Anyway, on this night I happened upon a crappy movie called "El Cantante" about a Puerto Rican singer in NYC in the 70's with a coke addiction. But the music was hot, especially the backing band during the concert hall scenes.

It seemed like a tribute movie, and indeed it was - to the Nuyorican salsa singer for the Fania All Stars, Héctor Lavoe.

Now, exactly one solar cycle later, I am again escaping the Seattle winter, this time in Miami. On my bike rides into the marine lab on Virginia Key I traverse a lovely overpass of bumper-to-bumper Route 1, with a view of the Miami Science Museum announcing their current exhibit "Música."

After confirming that my Pacific Science Center "Family Pass" (shout out to my Seattle Family!) gets me admission to said museum, I stopped by last Thursday to check it out.

I won't go into too much detail except to say that this is something like the perfect exhibit, complete with headphones that could keep you listening all day, drowning out the announcements that the museum is closing for the night. The theme is latino music in the US, and it is freakin fabulous.

An interview montage video described one of the great concerts of all time: the Fania All Stars live at Club Cheetah (NYC), Aug 21 1971. Apparently it was sold to about 10-20x capacity, but as you'll see, people still had room to dance.

So I come home, take out the youtube magic wand, and these two gems materialize:

- 1) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MCUwCDuX4Y&ab_channel=SehidraGruas - a nice visual montage surrounding a totally smoking number. My favorite part is the audience clapping clave in perfect time.
- 2) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j68d0QGq3bk> - cha cha cha, barrio style.

The guy being interviewed in the museum vid described the concert as key moment in the blossoming of the Nuyorican movement.

I was 2 years old at the time, right around then we moved to the Bronx. I consider it a profound influence.

enjoy!
love,
bug