

A man in a bright blue suit and a grey flat cap sits on a stone ledge on a rooftop. He is holding a trumpet. The background is a black and white photograph of a city street with buildings and cars. The text 'JONATHAN MAMBO POWELL JAZZ PARTY' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

JONATHAN MAMBO
POWELL JAZZ
PARTY

Inspiration is boundless. Traditions throughout the world are inspired by the dynamic cultures and spirits that shape them. Take Maa Saraswati for example, the Hindu goddess of creativity and music. Or Èṣù, the Yoruba deity who personifies nuance and mischief. Both conspire to cultivate magic, intrigue, depth, passion and celebration within the arts they influence. And that's exactly what you'll hear from the remarkable ingenuity of trumpeter Jonathan Powell and the rambunctious imagination you'll experience throughout his new album Mambo Jazz Party.

Technically gifted, fluent in several styles of music, and having earned the reputation as a consummate musician and scorching soloist, Powell's career has encompassed rock, funk, pop, salsa, Jazz and Latin Jazz. As a sought after sideman in New York City, Powell has performed with Eddie Palmieri, Arturo O' Farrill, Darcy James Argue, Miguel Zenon, Blood, Sweat & Tears, and Oscar Hernández.

Love is a mercurial but faithful compass for musicians. Thus Mambo Jazz Party finds Powell carefully curating compositions steered by a sincere love for music he's studied, played and treasured for years. Balancing a deep appreciation for tradition with Powell's deft arranging, Mambo Jazz Party's enchanting formula thrives by incorporating the ancestral legacies of mambo, rumba, and the cha cha, with the full throttle quality of descarga and comparsa - the incomparable musical forms that ignite, and in the right hands, stretch the idioms of salsa and Latin Jazz.

Making that possible is a band of veteran musicians (many band leaders and unsung heroes

in their own right) who have propelled salsa and Latin Jazz to extraordinary new heights. Central to this process, and Mambo Jazz Party's enduring appeal, is Powell's tantalizing use of various rhythmic devices as arranging strategies that breathe new life in the album's tasty a la carte collection of classics and original compositions.

Juancito, written for salsa trumpeter Juancito Torres, opens with the boisterous play of trombonist Jimmy Bosch, as the tune energetically unfolds to a rumba before settling into a nice vehicle for Powell to solo over. Hope floats atop a buoyant open bass line, stellar horn choruses, and powerful solos from Powell, flutist Itai Kriss, and electric guitarist Nir Felder. Written and recorded by Chick Corea for his 1973 album *Light As A Feather, You're Everything* fits seamlessly into Powell's Mambo Party mindset, invigorated by lead vocalist Ariacne Trujillo and a gorgeous arrangement by trombonist, and album co-producer, Doug Beavers.

Joe Henderson's *Inner Urge* takes on an entirely new energy as Powell's arrangement uses metric modulations to add a unique dimension to the chord progressions of the song. Next, Powell seamlessly adapts Herbie Hancock's *Butterfly* to a cha cha while spiking his horn with pedal effects and a few extra ounces of reverb. Superb solos by keyboardist Manual Valera, Beavers, saxophonist Jeremy Powell and percussionists Marcos Torres and Camilo Molina, and a rousing comparsa, round out this extravagant interpretation. Featuring vocalist Anthony Almonte, arranged by Angel Fernandez, and hand picked by "El Rumbero del Piano" himself, *Un Dia Bonito II* sparkles with the signature energy of an Eddie Palmieri composition.

Speed kills on *Frogwalla* as Powell rips through a boisterous melodic line influenced by mambo provocateur Emiliano Salvador. Stretching out within Terumasa Hino's *Alone, Alone and Alone*, Powell explores his softer side, honoring a song first recorded on Blue Mitchell's 1966 album *Down With It!* Bata drums announce the first of two songs dedicated to yogi Paramahansa Yogananda. Simmering over an Afro-Cuban

6/8 beat, Paramahansa showcases the sublime rhythmic foundation percussionists Camilo Molina, Marcos Lopez, Marcos Torres and Luisito Quintero bring to every song on the album, while Yogananda explores Powell's fascination with Hindu philosophies through the meditative quality of a soft mambo groove anchored by bassist Luques Curtis.

Visions of Cuba take center stage with Juegetón, written by pianist Frank Domínguez and first popularized in 1959 by the Cuban vocalist Merceditas Valdés. Ending with another Jazz legend, two in fact, Powell positions Lee Morgan's Totem Pole within the energy and melodic framework of Tito Puente's classic tune New Arrival. Collapsing adjacent genres like this makes for a fitting end to Mambo Jazz Party's ambition to find intriguing ways to make music matter, while making sure you won't sit still while taking it all in.

Having grown up loving everything from Hindustani music and the electronic improvisations of Square Pusher and DJ Shadow, to salsa, and the music of masters like Eddie Palmieri, Jonathan Powell has manifested a unique musical world view. Within the deeper physics of creative pursuits, be it assimilating Maa Saraswati and Èṣù, or Miles Davis and Tito Puente, Powell acts as a particular accelerator; an artist unafraid to smash concepts together honoring a pledge to create innovative interpretations of musical traditions he's spent his life mastering.

Breaking down music into such small pieces can be trying. But as someone who solders together analog synthesizers in his spare time, Powell is at peace with the role of tinkerer. If there's a divine path to these pursuits, Powell believes it resides within the intrinsic spiritual dimension of the music he creates. "Music is god. Energy is god. Everything we do is tied to this." Imagining a place for yourself in music can be a precarious practice. How you define your art, sense of purpose and creative niche can be years in the making. For Jonathan Powell, Mambo Jazz Party is a huge step towards that goal. Prepare to be inspired.