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Rhythms Of Race: Cuban Musicians And The Making Of Latino New York City And Miami, 1940-1960 (Envisioning Cuba)



Synopsis

Among the nearly 90,000 Cubans who settled in New York City and Miami in the 1940s and 1950s were numerous musicians and entertainers, black and white, who did more than fill dance halls with the rhythms of the rumba, mambo, and cha cha cha. In her history of music and race in midcentury America, Christina D. Abreu argues that these musicians, through their work in music festivals, nightclubs, social clubs, and television and film productions, played central roles in the development of Cuban, Afro-Cuban, Latino, and Afro-Latino identities and communities. Abreu draws from previously untapped oral histories, cultural materials, and Spanish-language media to uncover the lives and broader social and cultural significance of these vibrant performers. Keeping in view the wider context of the domestic and international entertainment industries, Abreu underscores how the racially diverse musicians in her study were also migrants and laborers. Her focus on the Cuban presence in New York City and Miami before the Cuban Revolution of 1959 offers a much needed critique of the post-1959 bias in Cuban American studies as well as insights into important connections between Cuban migration and other twentieth-century Latino migrations.

Book Information

Series: Envisioning Cuba

Paperback: 322 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press (May 4, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1469620847

ISBN-13: 978-1469620848

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #646,719 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #36 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International > Salsa #197 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Cuba #265 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International > Ethnomusicology

Customer Reviews

A valuable addition to the Latino music-making historiography.--Journal of Southern History A fascinating account of an understudied form of labor migration in an equally understudied period of U.S. immigration history.--American Historical Review A very thoroughly researched work and the

first to deal deeply with the topic, Abreu's book is a very necessary contribution to Cuban and Latino scholarship.--International Migration Review This significant study helps elucidate the multiple evolving meanings of Cubanidad and Latino/a identity in the US.--CHOICE Demonstrates that Cuban musicians and diverse audiences shaped what it meant not just to be (Afro) Cuban but also Latin or Hispanic within the United States.--Florida Historical Quarterly Makes significant contributions to pan-ethnic studies about Cubans and Latinos in the United States.--Journal of American History

A much-needed contribution to the understanding of the establishment of Cuban identity in the United States, which--until now--has been largely focused on the self-presentation of the Cuban-American community that developed in southern Florida following the 1959 revolution. Christina Abreu persuasively excavates the earlier development of Cuban, Afro-Cuban, and Hispano/Latino identity in the 1940s and 1950s.--Raul A. Fernandez, University of California, Irvine In this exceptional work of historical analysis, Christina Abreu's nuanced, insightful argument draws on a range of compelling materials--some of which, thanks to her outstanding research discoveries, readers will be encountering for the first time. This is a remarkable, painstaking reconstruction of the story of music and race in Cuban America from 1940 to 1960 as it played out in the everyday spaces and institutions of halls, dance floors, and print culture.--Antonio Lopez, The George Washington University

Well researched and engagingly written, it provides a useful account of Cuban musicians in the United States during a seminal period in the development of Cuban music, between 1940 and 1960, mostly in New York. As a "university book," it is heavily documented; it also embraces a now-fashionable left-liberal jargon that invariably and inevitably collapses every point to a "discourse on race." This aspect aside, there is much to be learned from this book about the world of Cuban music in New York (and Miami) during the mambo craze.

I'm a student of Afro-Cuban percussion and interested in this history. I really liked this book.

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