

ABOUT "MONGO" SANTAMARÍA

The late 1940's saw the birth of Latin Jazz in New York City, performed first by its pioneers Machito, Mario Bauza, Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo. **Ramón "Mongo" Santamaría Rodríguez** emerged from the next wave of Latin Jazz that was led by vibraphonist Cal Tjader and timbalero Tito Puente. When Mongo finally became a bandleader himself, his impact was profound on both the Latin music world and the jazz world. His musical career was long, ushering in styles from religious Afro-Cuban drumming and charanga-jazz to pop-jazz, soul-jazz, Latin funk and eventually straight ahead Latin jazz. From Mongo's bands emerged some young players who eventually became jazz legends, such as Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock and Hubert Laws.

I had a chance to meet Mongo a few times during the years which culminated in a wonderful hangout on my radio show *Jazz on the Latin Side*, broadcast on KJazz 88.1 FM in Los Angeles) where he shared great stories and he also sat in with the live band that I had on the air that night. What a treat for my listeners! After his passing I felt like jazz fans were beginning to forget him. So I decided to form Mongorama in his honor and revisit his innovative charanga-jazz years of the 1960s. Mongo Santamaría was the most impactful Jazz "conguero" ever! Hopefully Mongorama will not only remind jazz fans of his greatness, but also create new fans that will explore his vast musical body of work. *Viva Mongo!!!!*

- Mongorama founder and bandleader José Rizo