

MARIALY PACHECO

“Reload” – Release date: October 14, 2022

You might assume this album is a declaration of war, given its title ... And Marialy Pacheco is indeed a fighter. She had to be. Otherwise she would not be where she is today. After all, this strong, smart, engaging, positive, captivating and utterly romantic lady is also Cuba's only female jazz pianist of worldwide acclaim. As in all of music history, not just now. These and many other unique traits have made her an internationally coveted artist showered with awards. Incidentally, after stints in Japan and Australia, these days the 39-year-old musician is making her home in Germany. Small wonder given this background that her mind-blowing new album, recorded with her trio, also features a German star trumpeter, Israel's currently most successful bass player and a musician who is also playing with Sting. “Reload” is not actually a reload and neither is it a new start, but a reinvention and a revival that bathes any artistic accomplishment of her piano personality in a fresh, glowing light. It's a statement, in every sense of the word.

Marialy Pacheco is a storyteller. Each note she plays carries meaning. Whether she lets her grand piano talk in full flowing chords or her fingers work up a storm on the keys – behind it all is always an idea, an experience. Naturally, she's experienced a fair bit herself. She fell in love with the piano aged seven and started her training at the renowned Conservatorio de Habana, supported by her parents (mum being a choirmaster, dad an opera singer). She then graduated with distinction from the Escuela Nacional de Artes, continued to study composition simultaneously winning two gold medals at the World Choir Games, with mum at her side, in the German city of Bremen (of all places). She always felt she would have to leave her small Caribbean island home behind to be able to share her music with the great, big world outside. She took this leap in 2005, staying on in Bremen all by herself, recording her first album as a trio. Entitled “Bendiciones,” blessings. She moves on, lives in Australia and in Japan and in 2012 takes part in the Solo Piano Competition of the legendary Montreux Jazz Festival. She is awarded the jury prize – as the first woman in the history of this competition – and also the audience award.

With “Reload”, Marialy Pacheco is dropping her twelfth album and her most touching and mature work to date. Aside from two Cuban standards, it only contains her own material. “I wanted to expand my color palette,” she explains the concept behind the album. “Here, my Cuban roots are growing in the direction of Latin American traditions and the influences from classical music.” The music is authentic, traditional and yet contemporary, thanks also to the two young musicians from Colombia, Juan Camillo Villa on bass and Miguel Altamar de la Torre on drums. The sum of these many parts is so much greater and expresses, in particular, her artistic character, making her feelings immediately accessible to each and everyone who listens to her music. You feel her pain when she’s playing her self-penned ballad “Flores de Invierno,” a melancholic piece on winter flowers where her trio is supported by Rhani Krija, otherwise known as Sting’s long-term percussionist. She makes “Oye el Carbonero,” the Cuban classic about the reputation of the coal man, her own, performing it with the Israeli star bass player Avishai Cohen, which gives it a fascinating modern twist. You’ll find yourself sashaying to her “Danzonete” in tandem with the American timbalero Karl Perazzo of Sheila E. and Santana fame. And even if you are now aware that “Zapateo” refers to the clicking of the heels in Flamenco dance, you will find your feet tapping along. Nils Wülker who seldom strays from his own successful band, puts in a rare guest appearance and turns her hymn-like composition “Cartagena Bliss” into quite an event, while showcasing Marialy Pacheco’s fresh fusion approach between Jazz and Latin American music. “Reload” is a melting-pot of various musical identities and a treasure trove of many life experiences – as well as one of the most impressive and emotional albums of our day.