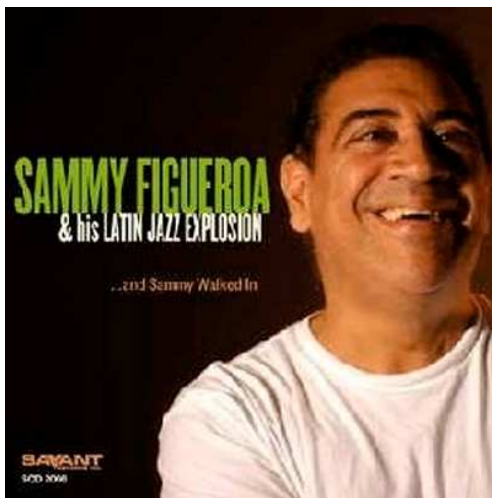


# JazzTimes®

## Sammy Figueroa & His Latin Jazz Explosion ...And Sammy Walked In

Savant

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By Bill Milkowski



While Sammy Figueroa has played with a dizzying variety of artists over the past 30 years, from Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis and Jaco Pastorius to Chaka Khan, David Bowie and Mariah Carey, this CD takes the Bronx native and South Florida-living drummer back to his Latin-jazz roots.

Figueroa and his Latin Jazz Explosion burst out of the gate with energy and verve on the opening song "Syncopa O No," bristling with chops-busting unison lines and fiery solo exchanges from saxophonist John Michalak, trumpeter John Lovell, pianist Michael Orta and electric bassist Nicky Orta. Figueroa adds fire to the proceedings with his precise, rapid-fire conga playing. They conjure an enchanting vibe on the alluring cha cha cha "Nico's Dream" and on a

rendition of Hermeto Pascoal's pensive bossa "Bebe."

The title track, Michel Camilo's homage to Figueroa, is a funky boogaloo-son that features an outstanding conga solo by Figueroa. Bassist Orta showcases his Jacoesque facility on the lively "Eugenology" and also turns in a stunning bop-fueled solo on "Mambo Influenciado." Figueroa and company turn in a funkified arrangement of Cedar Walton's classic "Bolivia," and Figueroa offers a rare vocal performance on the lovely and intimate closer, "Duermete Mi Cielito," accompanying himself on a tuned percussion instrument called the hangpan.