

DOWNBEAT

JUNE 2008

Chico Hamilton

Alternate Dimensions Of El Chico

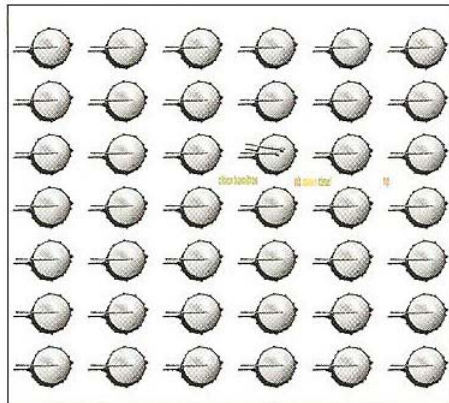
SOULFEAST/JOYOUS
SHOUT 10006

★★½

It's About Time! »

JOYOUS SHOUT 10009

★★★½



At 86 years old, drummer Chico Hamilton doesn't sit still. Always possessed of an adventurous spirit and a desire to find new ways to voice his compositions, he's now lending his music to remix artists at the same time as he looks back 53 years to his first recording as a leader.

Along with some of the Blue Note soul-boppers, Hamilton was an early favorite with dancehall samplers, and *Alternate Dimensions Of El Chico* reflects that success by turning the controls over to SoulFeast (Brian Michael Bacchus and Joaquin "Joe" Claussell) and New Zealand DJ Mark de Clive-Lowe. The results are mixed, peaking with the raucous, accordion-driven "I'm Still Thirsty." Elsewhere—particularly on two versions of "Mysterious Maiden" that total 18 minutes—the usual problems associated with nu-jazz dominate. Too hard-edged for smooth jazz lovers yet far too repetitious for serious listening, it sits in some strange netherworld where colorful martinis rule. De Clive-Lowe's remix of "El Toro" has Gabor Szabo's guitar and Charles Lloyd's flute going for it, but the mix renders the bass too boomy and wordless vocals by de

Clive-Lowe's partner Bembe Segue add nothing to the original.

Inspired by his 1955 debut on Pacific Jazz with Howard Roberts and George Duvivier, *It's About Time!* is as much about the bond a band forms as anything else. Guitarist Cary DeNigris and bassist Paul Ramsey have now been with Hamilton for more than 25 years, and the pieces on this 28-minute

EP are mostly love songs they wrote to one other. With "Cary" and "Paul," Hamilton gives both of them a showcase—each opens with a two-minute solo before switching to a groove that allows the drummer to illustrate how to make simplicity swing. DeNigris' rich and raw electric sound buzzes throughout "Autumn In New York" over the drummer's melodic mallet percussion, and Ramsey's exceptionally bright-toned electric bass contrasts with Hamilton's brushes on "What If." The best is saved for last—a remake of Jimmy Cheatham's "Nutteye" that finds the three of them flying through the twisting unison lines and Hamilton scatting like the years mean nothing.

For Hamilton, maybe they don't.

—James Hale

Alternate Dimensions Of El Chico: Simple Timeless; Mysterious Maiden (SF Reach Edit); Je Ka Jo (Joaquin's Dream Version); Mysterious Maiden (Yin & Yang Club); El Toro (Mark de Clive-Lowe Remix); Elevation; I'm Still Thirsty. (48:26)

It's About Time! Cary; Autumn In New York; What If; Tone Poem In D; Nod To Gabor; Paul; 6/8 For CH; Nutteye (For Jimmy). (28:23)

» Ordering info: joyousshout.com