



CAMA

"Artist Lecture Series" | musicologist David Malvinni, Ph.D.

Sound/Stage #8: Chicano Batman

Online Pre-Event Lecture by Musicologist
David Malvinni, Ph.D.

Friday, November 13, 2020



Sound/Stage #8 Program

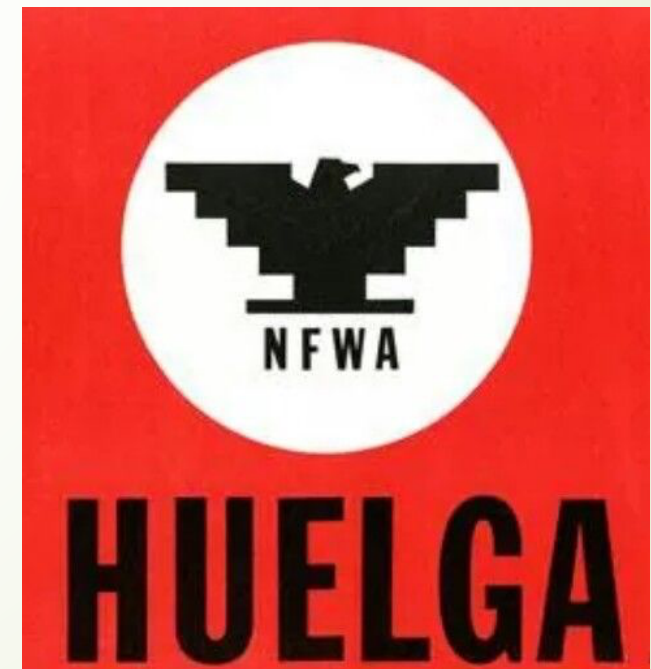
Episode: “Chicano Batman”

Since 2008, Chicano Batman has blended the many sounds of L.A. into a genre-bending mix that offers both societal critiques and an unabashed dance party. The band’s SOUND/STAGE set features songs from their latest album, *Invisible People*, which has been called “their funkier political statement yet.”

Delivering a Message, while still playing dance music

Name comes from the bat-like symbol of Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers Movement (*huelga*=strike)

Chicano: more political aware term than the mass media’s “Latino,” political term that reaches back to the “power” era (1960s) for the marginalized—Black power, Red power, Brown power



Chicano Batman

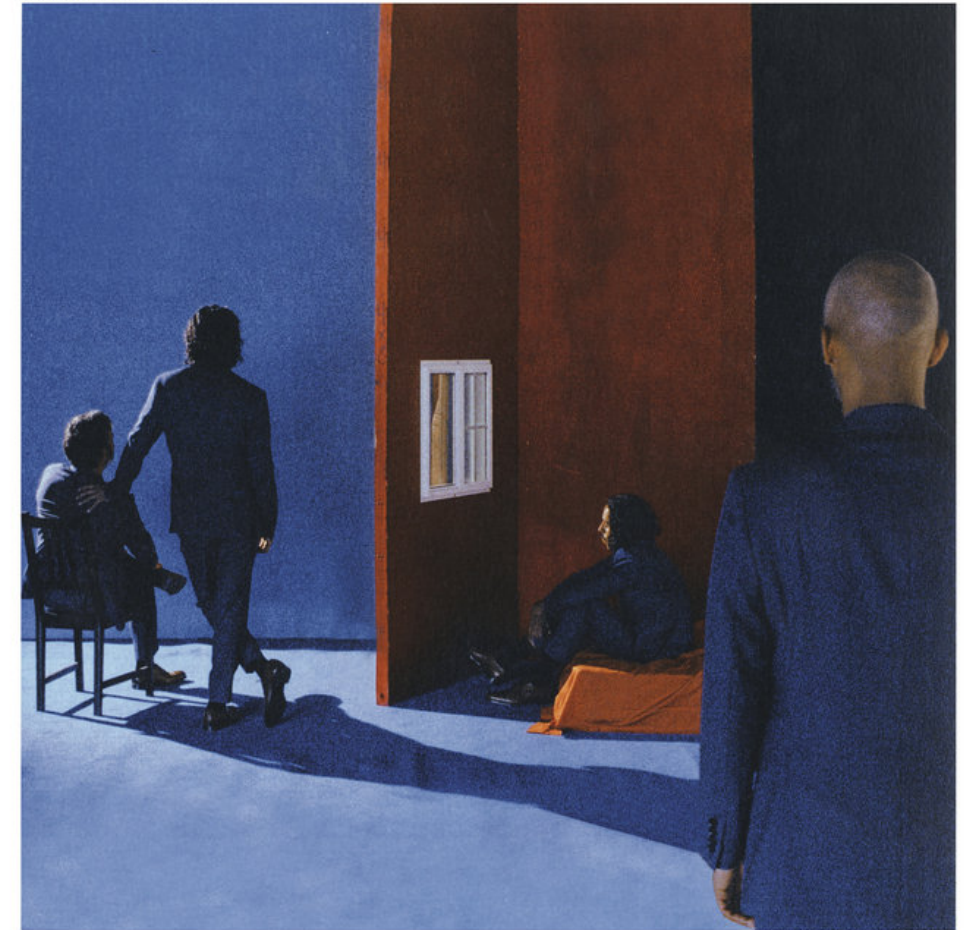
- Started in 2008, by four Latinos
- Hybrid group, mixing many popular styles; REVIVALIST group
- Soul, funk, and rock
- Toured with Jack White in 2015
- Appeared on *Conan* in 2017
- Also cite Brazilian music, Beatles, and Curtis Mayfield as influences
- Mix Spanish and English lyrics
- “LA’s house band”
- Drummer is from Columbia, others from LA area; on same label ATO as Atlanta Shakes



Invisible People (2020)

- Title track of latest album, *Invisible People*; analog sound, most accessible album (Pitchfork)
- Stark, synthesized sound, with a phaser on the voice; evokes the '70s, yet '80s electronics and drum sound
- "We're tired of living in the dark...the concept of race was implanted inside your brain"
- Drug embrace/ and use of profanity (F* word)
- "F* the system"
- Radical song for revolution:
- "It's Time to start all over/you best believe we're taking over"
- Not clear who "we" are, but it seems: economically disadvantaged people and homeless people, with a racial component
- "Spinning": a drug reference that collides with political message

CHICANO BATMAN



INVISIBLE PEOPLE

"statement of hope, a proclamation that we are All invisible people, and that despite race, class, and gender We can overcome our differences and stand together."

Overview of songs

- In a derivative style, everything tends to recall something earlier, produces a nostalgic effect; very pop, with big hook and synthesizer effects
- "Color My Life": like Queen's "Cool Cat" crossed with Parliament [problem: Queen's song is so much better]
- "Pink Elephant"—short staccato bass line; 90s hip hop and R and B mashup
- "Manuel's Story": spacey synth music about a tragic story, about drug cartels; with a disco beat
- N.B.: No Spanish on the album
- "Blank State"—evokes "Electric Feel" by MGMT, again original so much better



Set List for Sound/ Stage

- 1 "Color My Life"; with female vocal backup
- 2 "Moment of Joy" 90s R & B, Hip Hop
- 3. "Manual's Story" first political song
- 4. "I Know It" (love song), Black Lives Matter guitar, guitar doubles melody for chorus
- 5. "Polymetronomic Harmony"
- 6. "Invisible People"—the highlight of the set
- **INTERVIEW:** Los Angeles wealth of talent, growing up in '90s, Beastie Boys, cross genre, Rage Against Machine-Latino fronting a rock group; Herbie Hancock, Sergio Mendes; Bardo Martinez: write what I feel, synthesize the world, connect with people; IP: different rhythms, drummer from Columbia—Indian music with African roots; danceable groovy music; Reflection of who we are, not in the Mainstream; humanity is political
- Why? Solidarity for Sanctuary, organized concert at the Ford with activists, to help legal services for immigrants, raise voices collectively, vulnerable populations, inspired by Selena (Quintanilla)
- Chicano movement grounded in concept of Aztlán, mythical Aztec Empire, Southwest separationism from USA

