

Arturo Sandoval's Trumpet Evolution Heads to Latin Grammys

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Arturo Sandoval has evolved into one of the world's most acknowledged guardians of jazz trumpet and flugelhorn, as well as a renowned classical artist. Born in Artemisa, a small town outside Havana, Cuba, Sandoval performed as a classical musician with the Cuban Orchestra of Modern Music, the BBC Symphony in London, and the Leningrad Symphony in Russia. Since defecting to the United States in 1990, he has not only expanded his circle of influence within the classical community, he has established himself as one of the most acclaimed jazz trumpeters in the world. His latest CD, titled *Trumpet Evolution*, had been nominated for a 2004 Latin Grammy.

Trumpet Evolution, released in May 2003 on the Crescent Moon label, is considered by many to be the finest moment of Sandoval's long career and one of the greatest jazz records produced in years. Self-produced by Sandoval, the album features 19 tracks encompassing a mix of small ensemble, big band, and orchestral performances. Celebrated musician/producer Quincy Jones was the executive producer for the project. Trumpeter Gary Grant served as co-producer, while Al Schmitt, Armin Steiner, and Eric Shilling engineered the recordings.

Recorded during the 4th quarter of 2002, *Trumpet Evolution* is the product of recording sessions that took place at Sandoval's home studio in southern Florida for the small ensemble works, as well as the studios of Capitol Records and Todd-AO in Los Angeles, CA for the big band and orchestral sessions. The CD was mixed and mastered at Miami's Crescent Moon by Eric Shilling.

Chosen as co-producer because of his expertise performing and recording the trumpet, Gary Grant not only selected the engineers for the sessions, but also had considerable influence on all aspects of the album, including equipment decisions. Throughout the project's roughly 30 session hours, a basic recording package remained consistent. This included a Digidesign Pro Tools HD recording system, a Universal Audio 2-610 two-channel tube microphone preamplifier, and a collection of assorted Royer ribbon microphones including the company's

SF-12 stereo ribbon mic, R-121 and SF-1 dynamic ribbon mics, plus an R-122 phantom powered model. All recordings were captured at 24-bit / 88.2 kHz.

According to Grant, “The biggest challenge when recording the trumpet is to avoid overpowering the microphone. Arturo’s virtuosity with the trumpet enables him to play extremely softly and also very powerfully. Because he is such a powerful player, he can move so much air through the horn that he distorts most microphones. For this application, I’ve found that a ribbon mic is a better choice. Throughout the entire project, we recorded Arturo with a Royer R-122, which we positioned anywhere from one to three feet from the bell of the horn. These recordings were captured without compressors or limiters. I wanted the most natural sound possible, and that meant a straight path into the recorder.”

Among the various tracks on the album, Arturo recorded the Shorty Rogers tune Maynard Ferguson, where he was playing as high as G above double C. “In terms of volume and air pressure, this is the equivalent of having a jet plane take off in front of the mic,” said Grant. “I simply don’t know what we would have done without the R-122 for all the different styles and volumes that Arturo played. Not once did we have any problem capturing Arturo’s sound and performance”

Of the eleven tracks recorded in LA, Armin Steiner engineered the three orchestral pieces recorded at Todd-AO. These works include Calero’s La Virgen de la Macarena, Giuseppe Tartini’s Concerto in D Major (First Movement), and Reinhold Gliere’s Coloratura Concerto for Soprano (First Movement). Al Schmitt engineered the eight big band tracks recorded at Capitol Records’ Studio A while renowned trumpeter Jerry Hey arranged and conducted the sessions. At Capitol, Schmitt employed two Neumann M50s and a Royer SF-12 as room mics, along with four Royer R-121s for the trombones, plus two R-121s and two SF-1s for the trumpets. The drums were set up in an isolation booth for separation. Schmitt used a variety of microphones on the kit, including a Royer SF-12 stereo ribbon microphone for overheads. Mick Stern ran the Pro Tools HD system during the LA sessions.

Among the tracks recorded at Capitol Records, Dizzy Gillespie’s classic tune Manteca is perhaps most notable as it involved Sandoval playing one of Dizzy’s own trumpets given to him years earlier. Jones, Hey, and Grant—all accomplished trumpeters—noted this particular trumpet was very difficult to play, which makes Arturo’s brilliant playing on Manteca even more admirable.

With its nomination to the recent Latin Grammy Awards, Trumpet Evolution represents another impressive accomplishment for one of music's most critically acclaimed trumpeters. Reflecting on the project, Schmitt summed matters up by saying, "This was an extremely important project to me because I've worked with Arturo several times in the past and he's one of my favorite people. Gary, Jerry, and everyone else involved with this album gave their all, and it shows. I'm excited for Arturo and am proud to be part of this. I wish the best for Arturo and this album."

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