

Meridian Brothers 'Desesperanza'



CD/LP/Digital SNDW 049

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Bogota's Meridian Brothers release their delightfully surreal and playful album 'Desesperanza' on 24th September on Soundway Records. Traditional instruments, electronics and distorted vocals are dragged through an array of influences to create a world that is as original as it is unclassifiable.

Straddling the line between new and old, Meridian Brothers' mischievous blend of Latin rhythms and psychedelic grooves is the creation of Eblis Álvarez, one of the key figures of the experimental music scene in Bogota. As with all of the Meridian Brother's releases, every instrument on 'Desesperanza' was played and recorded by Eblis himself.

A true avant-garde guitar player and composer he also plays in Mario Galeano's band Frente Cumbiero and was one of the 42 musicians involved in the recording of Ondatrópica, released this summer through Soundway Records.



Meridian Brothers started back in 1998 with Eblis experimenting with alternative ways of playing instruments and electronic media. Heavily influenced by Latin rock (Argentinian in particular) these early recordings were distributed by cassette on the underground music market in Bogota. It was in 1999, after joining Mario Galeano's Ensemble Polifónico Vallenato that Eblis first became interested in the tropical music of Colombia and began working these new influences it in to the Meridian Brothers.

Another key period in his development was his time spent in Denmark at the Royal Danish Academy of Music and the DIEM (Danish Institute of Electronic Music). It was during this stage Eblis started using more sophisticated and intricate techniques in both electronics and signal processing.

Eblis returned to Bogota in 2008, joining a burgeoning music scene with *cumbia*, *salsa* and *currulao* all being explored by a new generation of Colombian musicians. 2009's "Meridian Brothers VI" goes deep into tropical sounds of the 60s and 70s in Colombia and integrates other influences such as highlife, Ethiopian music, surf and Peruvian and Colombian cumbia.

It was around this stage that Meridian Brothers made their first appearances as a live band with Damien Ponce (Percussion), Maria Valencia (clarinet, saxophone and synthesizers), Alejandro Forero (Keyboards), Cesar Quevedo (bass) and Eblis Alvarez (vocals, guitar and electronics).

In 2011 "Meridian Brothers VII" was released. The sound of this album returns to Latin American rock influences as well as *champeta* experiments, jazz, *cumbia* and tropical. Distorted sounds, electronic changes in voice, obscure surf guitar and randomly changed sampled percussion all collide head on. Two tracks from this record were released on 7" by New York label Names You Can Trust in 2012.

Which bring us to 'Desesperanza' (meaning hopelessness in English) Recorded in 2012 the album is dedicated exclusively to salsa and tropical music, twisting it through a dark and theatrical soundscape but never abandoning the traditional aesthetics.

A real musical maverick, labelled a genius by his contemporaries in Colombia, Eblis Álvarez's latest Meridian Brothers album finally gets a full, worldwide release.

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