

## The Jazz Festival

# A Tribute to Machito

By PETER WATROUS

"Latin Jazz Jam: A Tribute to Machito," at Carnegie Hall on Saturday night, was a dismal affair for the most part. As usual for JVC Jazz Festival concerts at Carnegie Hall, the sound system was inadequate, turning solos into noisy interludes. And as usual for these long, star-laden shows, the banal presentation managed to crush the genuinely musical moments. Making matters worse were two disingenuous masters of ceremony, whose insightful comments were on the level of "Tito Puente's been playing for three and a half decades — that's 35 years!"

There were two highpoints: Paquito D'Rivera, a Cuban saxophonist and clarinetist, introduced a Brazilian singer, Ana Caram, who sang several beautiful songs accompanying herself fluidly on guitar. Backed by Mr. D'Rivera and his band, Miss Caram vocally reproduced percussion sounds, then launched into a fast samba; Mr. D'Rivera, on clarinet, motioned the band to quit, and he and Miss Caram went into a playful duet, improvising rhythmically over the song's chords.

The second highpoint of the show was Celia Cruz, the great Cuban singer who, backed by a brassy orchestra led by Mr. Puente, performed as she usually does, which is magnificently. Miss Cruz's voice, piercing and intense, ripped through the glittery band arrangements; as an improviser, Miss Cruz phrases as if she were a drummer. She sang many of



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Celia Cruz, one of the artists who paid tribute to Machito.

her hits — the audience sang along with her — and she'd repeat phrases, hammering them against the beat to make them float.

The last piece of the night, a jam session in tribute to Machito, ended abruptly as the two emcees, looking a bit like a hit squad, came out on stage in the midst of the number, motioning that the time was up.

The Paris Opera Ballet