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contemporary spring 09



Rodriguez + Fujiya & Miyagi

6 Jun 09 8pm

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Free programme

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Rodriguez

Rodriguez + Fujiya & Miyagi

Produced in association
with the Big Chill

the
Big Chill
festival

Rodriguez

Rodriguez guitar

Andreas Unge bass

Jesper Nordenstrom organs

Johan Carlberg guitar

Moussa Fadera drums

Sid Gauld trumpet

Harry Brown trombone

Fujiya and Myagi

Steve Lewis beats/programming/synth /BVs

David Best vocals/guitar/korg

Matt Hainsby bass guitar/BVs/korg

Lee Adams drums

ClubStage

Matthew Herbert DJ set

In the early 1980s, my university had a soundtrack. Unofficial, of course, but a soundtrack that underpinned the mood of our sprawling, politicised campus, a place where dope was smoked freely, tuition fees had been abolished, police weren't allowed in (unless they told us they were coming), and activism – like socialism and feminism – was as normal as, well, borrowing your dad's car without asking.

"The system's gonna fall soon/to an angry young tune," we'd sing, brandishing an LP cover with a photo of an enigmatic-looking bloke in dark glasses. "And that's a concrete cold fact," we'd chorus, convinced of it.

No one knew much about Rodriguez, the singer/songwriter we were singing (and toking) along to, except that his voice recalled Dylan's and he'd crafted a powerful agit-pop [sic] album called *Cold Fact*. An album filled with anti-establishment lyrics about alienation, social disillusionment and tainted love; urban poverty, police brutality and drug addiction. If you didn't own a copy (taping a friend's was okay) then you simply weren't cool. Cold fact.

This was Melbourne, Australia. Someone might have mentioned that Rodriguez was from Detroit in Michigan, America, and that his parents were middle-class immigrants from Mexico, but it's a little hazy now (for a while I'd assumed he was blind; the dark glasses got me confused with José Feliciano). None of which mattered: the songs were the thing. Songs that fused rock, folk and jazz; soul, blues and (who!) psychedelia. Witty, painfully honest songs like *Crucify Your Mind*, *Forget It* and *I Wonder*. Songs like the perfectly formed *Sugar Man*: an alternative White Rabbit that even our lecturers could recite verbatim.

Unbeknownst to us (much, indeed, was unbeknownst) Rodriguez had actually recorded *Cold Fact* in 1970 after being spotted playing in bars around Detroit, which he sometimes did after clocking off work in one of the city's motor factories. Released on an American label called Sussex – home of the then unknown soulster Bill Withers – the album had done badly in both the US and Europe; its 1971 follow-up, *Coming From Reality*, had fared even worse.

Rodriguez shrugged and got on with life. "I didn't give up on music," he's said. "I just gave up being 'out there'."

But while Sixto Diaz Rodriguez busied himself by returning to study (philosophy, naturally), working as a schoolteacher and social worker and regularly seeking political office to pursue the issues he once sang about ("You've got to do something"), his albums got on with their lives, too. After imported copies ran dry an Australian label, Blue Goose Music, released them in the mid 1970s; Australia and New Zealand snapped them up. Meanwhile, over in apartheid-era South Africa, Rodriguez became a countercultural hero. To South African soldiers fighting on the border he was what Hendrix was to Americans in Vietnam.

Late one night an Australian DJ played *Cold Fact* in its entirety, before announcing that contrary to rumours, Rodriguez wasn't dead. The switchboard jammed. Rodriguez's ensuing 1979 tour of Down Under saw him play to more than 30,000 people. A live album, the rumour-quashing *Alive*, was released. There was a final tour with Ausrockers Midnight Oil (whose lead singer actually did get elected to office, and is there now) in 1981. All of which passed me and my school-aged pals by; by the time we hit university not long afterwards, all we had to go on was the records.

Rodriguez – busy living, working and raising two daughters – was always unaware of his megastardom in South Africa. In 1991 both *Cold Fact* and *Coming From Reality* were released on CD there for the first time. For a few years the rumours swirled again: that he'd shot himself onstage. That he was in a mental hospital. That he'd gone blind (that one really got to me). Then in the late 1990s his daughter found a website called 'The

Great Rodriguez Hunt' and realised the extent of her dad's iconic Sarfie status. Rodriguez left off labouring on a building site (or so the story goes); a series of triumphant South African stadium tours and a documentary called *Dead Men Don't Tour* followed.

There've been more performances in the years hence. All have confirmed that he is in fine voice, that his songs – those gorgeous, sparkling songs – still sound cool, and real, and relevant. Last year Rodriguez even toured America, 38 years after he first recorded *Cold Fact*.

And now, finally, Britain has got him. Now, finally, you get him. For not only have *Cold*

Fact and *Coming From Reality* been re-released by Light in the Attic, this very special show is produced in association with hip festival pioneers The Big Chill. There's support in the form of Zeitgeist-lasooing Brighton quartet Fujiya & Miyagi and a post-gig DJ set from Rodriguez fan Matthew Herbert. It is, they all say, an honour.

Excuse us, won't you – us who got him first – if we sing long. We've been singing along for a while. So, all together then: "Silver magic ships you carry/Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane..."

Programme note © Jane Cornwell

Sponsored by Havana Club



There will be one interval in tonight's concert. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the Barbican premises. No cameras, tape recorders or any other recording equipment may be taken into the hall.



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DUB SYNDICATE / BRITISH SEA POWER
LAMB / ANDREW BIRD / SEA CUBANO

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the guardian



Tue 9 Jun 8pm
Chava Alberstein



Wed 10 Jun 8pm
Naturally 7



Fri 26 Jun 8pm
Café de los Maestros
UK debut for 20 piece veteran
Buenos Aires tango group.



Sat 27 Jun 7.30pm
Pablo Milanes
+ Harold Lopez Nussa
+ Son del Tropic



Sun 28 Jun 7.30pm
Los Van Van + Yoruba
Andabo
A steaming night of Cuban dance
music.



Thu 2 Jul 7.30pm
David Sanborn & special
guest Sam Moore
+ YolanDa Brown



Fri 3 Jul 8pm
Ute Lemper: Angels Over
Berlin



Sat 4 Jul 8pm
Carmen Linares
+ Andres Pena and Pilar Ogalla



Wed 8 Jul 7.30pm
Medeski Martin & Wood
+ The Claudia Quintet



Fri 10 Jul 7.30pm
Hiromi / Tineke Postma
Quartet / Yaron Herman
Featuring Geri Allen & Teri Lyne
Carrington



Sat 11 Jul 7.30pm
Boban Markovic Orkestar
Toni Kitanowski & Cherkezi
Orchestra



Thu 16 Jul 7.30pm
Sing The Truth: Nina
Simone Remembered
Featuring Dianne Reeves, Lizz
Wright, Angeliqe Kidjo & Simone



Fri 17 Jul 7.30pm
Orchestra di Piazza
Vittorio



Sun 19 Jul 3pm (Cargo)
Beyond The Ballroom:
A Celebration of UK Jazz
Dance
Gilles Peterson & Snowboy, The
Mighty Jeddo, Deep Rumba from
Dilanga



Sun 19 Jul 7.30pm
Very Cellular Songs: The
Music of The Incredible
String Band
Featuring Mike Heron and Clive
Palmer, Richard Thompson, Danny
Thompson, Alasdair Roberts,
Trembling Bells, Dr Strangely
Strange & Robyn Hitchcock



Sat 18 Jul 4pm Cinema 3
Vashti Bunyan: From Here
to Before (PG+)

Sun 19 Jul 4pm Cinema 3
Witchseason on Film
(Double Bill) + Q&A
Two documentaries following The
Incredible String Band and Nick
Drake's work

barbican do something different

Rodriguez | David Byrne | Dianne
Reeves | Angelique Kidjo | Naturally 7
| Zakir Hussain | David Sanborn | Ute Lemper |
Orquesta Aragon | Fairport Convention | Pablo
Milanes | Los Van Van | Estrella Morente |
Gilles Peterson & Snowboy | Wynton Marsalis |
Goran Bregovic | Kasai Allstars | Spok Frevo
| Antibalas | The Flatlanders
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