

Sound off for SOULSA

By Tasha Harris



photo: Amy Ponce

It is a few minutes before midnight on a wintry Friday as patrons line up outside of D'Antiqua in Jackson Heights, Queens.

The club is jam-packed without a single vacant seat as fans stand wall-to-wall and sit through the opening act and intermission for almost two hours, eagerly awaiting the main event. At around 1:40AM, Latin sensation, SOULSA takes the stage. The sound of a familiar rock guitar riff ignites the spirits of the restless crowd who jump to their feet to dance, sing-shouting the hook to the catchy single, "Mi Negra."

The handsome quintet is comprised of five New York musicians from Washington Heights: Alberto Diaz (vocals & guitar) Luis Baptista (bass), Anibal Collazo (conga & percussions) Tony Rodriguez, (bongo) and Juan Gerena (drums). Their distinctive sound is a delectable blend of rock, salsa, jazz and R&B. The band from uptown Manhattan plays a fusion of rock and afro-cuban rhythms that's raw, passionate and energetic. Soulsa has played private performances for Oscar de la Renta, VOGUE Magazine and Time Warner inc. SOULSA's edgy sound stands out due to the absence of piano and brass and has a widespread appeal.

To fans old and new, SOULSA's six-song set in the wee hours were worth the wait. The band's energy and Diaz's fiery vocals kept my attention for over an hour, despite the voice in my head that was nagging me to go home and hit the sack. My only complaint: I wish the band had a CD available and were booked more often.

Visit SOULSA's website at www.soulsaband.com.

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