

Hello, my name is Chico Pacheco from Ritmo Events & Entertainment and my company was the street promoter for this show tonight. I've been a supporter and consumer of Latin Music in Toronto my entire life. Back in the 90's Toronto was more of a Merengue city, as opposed to the Salsa city it is today, the top Merengue band in the country was called DOMINICANADA. That dance band was so energized and engaging, it would make audiences crazy, and in every show, the front men at some point would go to the back of the band, grab this one long-haired trumpet player, bring him to the front -- and make him solo, and sometimes even dance... and the crowds would always go wild.

And that's how I first saw Brownman Ali. He was that insane trumpet player blowing his brains out at the front of Dominicanada. But as entertaining as it was, anyone with ears could tell this kid had real abilities. As a musician myself I could hear there was depth to his playing far beyond the fun they were having on stage. We all quickly learned he had jazz training, having studied with the legendary trumpet player in New York City -- Randy Brecker.

By the early 2000's he was winning awards left and right, as the featured soloist with many bands. It seemed finally time for him to start his own group. One would think that a jazz musician would want his first group to be a jazz group, right? Not this Trinidadian born trumpet player. All those years with Latin groups had infected him to the core, and he wanted his 1st group to be 2 things -- based in Latin rhythms, and with his younger brother Marcus Ali, whom he stood next to in Dominicanada for all those years.

And so -- CRUZAO was born -- the great experiment. Brown had grown up obsessed with chordless jazz -- music without guitar or piano in it's instrumentation, and wanted to try that with his new band. And so CRUZAO's instrumentation would be Brown on trumpet, Marcus on alto, Paco Luviano on bass, Luisito Orbegoso on congas and a new arrival to Canada then -- Chendy Leon on drums. This insane group would spin heads both nationally and internationally. They would win everything there was to win in Canada including the coveted Montreal Jazz Fest's Grand Prix du Jazz award, and their album "Shades Of Brown" would rocket up the jazz charts leading to cross-country touring and invitations to headline the Havana Jazz Festival. Apparently this weird chordless Latin music from the mind of Brownman Ali, wasn't so weird after all.

But Brown -- ever the restless composer -- within a few years of CRUZAO's success would start to wonder if he could expand the group into something bigger. Something more complex. Something monstrous. And thus CRUZAO GRUPO MONSTRUOSO was born -- a big band version of CRUZAO that featured 6 horn players, 3 percussionists, 2 bassists, 2 Latin vocalists and 2 rappers. Truly - a Monster group, stacked with the country's top-shelf players in the fields of Latin, Jazz and Hip-hop. They stand behind me as representatives of the very best our country has produced, all ready to play Brownman Ali's incredible original compositions, painstakingly orchestrated for this one-of-a-kind large ensemble. Buckle up, you're in for a ride!

Ladies & Gentleman -- **Brownman Ali & CRUZAO GRUPO MONSTRUOSO**