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## Maria Bacardi: "Deseo"



Cuban boleros are a specialty all to themselves. Performed well, they are languid ballads with stories illustrating love gone wrong. To be convincing, a bolero requires a humid, husky timbre and a feeling that neatly combines grief and guarded optimism. The greats always sound shattered by a lost love but hopeful that tomorrow will bring fresh happiness. Among the finest female practitioners of the Cuban bolero have been Olga Guillot, Omara Portuando and Graciela Perez Grillo.



Add Maria Bacardi to the list [Photo of Maria Bacardi at top by Christine Newman]. The Cuban-born New Yorker's new album *Deseo* (or *Desire*) is perfect. Her voice is as lovely and confessional as it is emotionally pained. The sheer honesty in her delivery can come only from personal experience, talent and listening carefully to those who came before her.



The band here is first-rate. Producer David Oquendo [pictured above] is one of my absolute favorite acoustic guitarists. His strong, sentimental accompaniment on this album comforts Bacardi and provides her with empathetic support. His passion and taste are extraordinary. I've been going to hear David play for years—and I'm always struck by his soul, upbeat spirit and masterful technique.



On her debut album, Bacardi takes on 12 boleros—including the classic *Como Fue*, *Yellow Days* and *Interludio*. All are smoldering, moving and deeply sensual. Don't understand Spanish? Neither do I. Trust me, you'll catch on fast enough. Bacardi here reminds us how broken hearts used to communicate when imaginations were required. [Pictured above: Maria Bacardi and David Oquendo, left, last summer in East Hampton, N.Y. Photo by Christine Newman]