

# **Mp3 Ashanti (latin Jazz) - Dyos Bo'otik**

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Latin jazz with remarkably strong vocals, heavily influenced by the music of Brazil and Mexico 11 MP3 Songs LATIN: Latin Jazz, LATIN: Brazilian Jazz Details: Ashanti's beginnings date back to 1983 when Berklee College of Music students from Mexico, Switzerland, Chile, Japan, and Connecticut launched a new musical project. Their Latin jazz combo, dubbed Ashanti to recognize the African roots of the music they loved to play, performed regularly at a variety of Boston-area clubs and concert venues, and even appeared on the local CBS and NBC affiliates. In 1984, Ashanti relocated to Cancun and enjoyed steady work in the city's finest hotels and clubs for eight years. The group was resurrected in 1995 when the Mayor of Merida, Yucatan, Mexico invited the Ashanti to perform a celebration concert in honor of the historic city's 453rd anniversary. In 1996 and shortly after being named Director of Jazz Studies at Central College in Iowa, founding member Gabriel Espinosa introduced a handful of local "gringo" R&B and jazz players to the sensuous Latin music he knew so well. Since then, the latest incarnation of Ashanti has earned high visibility and an impressive following among the Midwest's ever-expanding community of Latin jazz aficionados. The Mayan phrase "dyos bo'otik" translates to English as "thank you" and was selected by Ashanti founder and CD producer Gabriel Espinosa whose heritage is Maya. Espinosa, who was born and raised in Merida, Mexico on the Yucatan Peninsula, directs the jazz studies program at his alma mater Central College and is also an adjunct faculty member in the music department at Grinnell College. "With this project, we all want to let our families and friends know how much we cherish the support and encouragement they have shared with us as we have chased our musical dreams throughout our lives," Espinosa explained. Other regular members of the band include drummer Tim Crumley and pianist Eric Sickler from Pella; trumpet player Dave Kobberdahl and saxophonist Bryan Schumacker from Des Moines; and saxophonist Bob Long who recently moved from Des Moines to Saint Joseph, Missouri. Also featured on the CD are vocalist Erin Fishler from Creston, guitarist Don Boyle from Janesville, and members of the Des Moines Symphony's string section. "This project is a milestone for Ashanti," Espinosa said. "The band has been together in Iowa now for eight years. Because we've become such great friends in that time, we're very comfortable challenging each other to grow musically. The music you

hear on this CD really is the product of a unique combination of encouragement and stretching." Even though several members of Ashanti are career musicians, the band is clearly a hobby for its members who generally play together only on weekends. Kobberdahl teaches in the West Des Moines school district and was recently named director of jazz studies at Valley High School, a post vacated by Long who just accepted a new assignment directing the jazz program at Missouri Western State College. Fishler, who teaches at Southwestern Community College, and Boyle also maintain music teaching studios. "It's been great to grow a very solid band but not have it consume all of us in the process," said Crumley who is one of Pella's Culligan men and the father of two young children. "After this many years together, our reputation is very good, so when we need to find a sub for a night, it's rarely a problem. Iowa's best musicians enjoy playing with Ashanti." Sickler, a former Central College vice president for marketing who does consulting for colleges and universities across the nation, manages the business and promotion for the band. "This CD project was a labor of love for Gabriel," Sickler said. "One night in the studio when he began telling us stories about the amazing support his mother gave him and his brothers when they were young musicians in Merida, we immediately decided to dedicate the CD to his mother...and to all of our mothers for what they've done to help us become the musicians and the people we are today." The 11 songs on the album run the gamut from quiet and reflective love songs to dance-inducing Latin cha-chas. For the project, trumpeter Kobberdahl penned a lively tune titled "Cha Ka" which features the surprising sounds of a live party in the middle of the song. "All but three of the songs on the CD are originals written by Gabriel, and there's just nothing better than playing our own music our way," Kobberdahl said. "We don't have dreams of becoming huge stars or anything, but we really are proud of the fact that the music on this album was written by us, for us." For more information, visit Ashanti's web site at [ashanti-online.com](http://ashanti-online.com).

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