

Chicago, IL, Release: October 15th, 2021. *For Immediate Release*

RICHARD JOHNSON | MITCH SHINER | ERIC HINES | “Regalito” | AVAILABLE OCTOBER 15, 2021 VIA AFAR MUSIC RECORDS

**Richard Johnson, Mitch Shiner and
Eric Hines Collaborate For a
Cross-Cultural Christmas Album**

***Regalito*, due out October 15, 2021, on
Afar Music Records, Features Fun, Fresh Latin
Grooves and Rhythms to Modernize Favorite
Christmas Songs**

What happens when you bring together talented jazz musicians to make a Latin-infused Christmas record? Well, a “little gift,” or ***Regalito***, as the project is called, out via Afar Records on October 1, 2021, and featuring arrangements and performances by **Richard Johnson, Mitch Shiner, and Eric Hines**.

On the project’s name and mission, Eric shares that the title is “short and sweet. The album is our gift, and music is our gift,” with Mitch adding that “the holiday season is about sharing love and good times with people. What better way to do that than with music?”

Indeed, when this talented trio comes together on ***Regalito***, it’s only too obvious that music is what they are meant to do. With fun, fresh additions of Latin grooves and rhythms, the cross-cultural record will have you finding a new appreciation for these otherwise familiar tunes, such as “Jingle Bells,” “We Three Kings,” and “Linus and Lucy” (now “Linus and Lucinda”!).

Richard notes that it isn’t always easy to combine music from different cultural backgrounds but that it’s nonetheless important, and all three musicians affirm the value in their project in terms of exposing people to new types of music.

Eric frames the project as “a cool opportunity to bring listeners in who gravitate toward certain things with music. We’re presenting something that’s enjoyable and festive, but it has some serious jazz language in there, which will help it appeal to the jazz people and the Latin music people and the Christmas music people.”

It was also important for the three musicians to feature music that had deep personal sentiment. “Walking in the Air” was one of Eric’s choices because he grew up hearing the track in the animated Christmas film *The Snowman*. They also remade the *Peanuts* theme song “Linus and Lucy,” a tune that Mitch (of Jewish faith) was unfamiliar with until he arrived at Indiana University, where bewildered professor Steve Houten insisted that he familiarize himself with the Christmas classic.

Although they hadn’t played together until the first rehearsal, you wouldn’t know it from listening to the smooth and evocative arrangements. Richard, as informal bandleader and project kick-starter, appreciates how smoothly the studio sessions went. Mitch adds that “It was a very open recording process, everyone was suggesting things, and having the experience of collaboration was an amazing opportunity, just

thrilling. I'm still riding that high after not having gotten to do that in such a long time."

This spirit of collaboration infuses their project in an important way, much like Richard, Eric, and Mitch infused classic tunes with a variety of different styles and grooves from Latin America. It was important, Eric recounts, to brainstorm so that they could cull from a variety of these different styles and rhythms: "a 6/8, an up-tempo mamba salsa, something slow, a cha-cha, bolero, etc. Once we had that variety, we thought about which Christmas songs would best suit those different styles."

Fortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic was wholly unable to stop this festive project from taking place, as the three musicians shared files back and forth over the cloud and connected on Zoom calls, Richard shared. There are even some benefits, as Eric pointed out: "the idea of getting professionals together who put in the work and write clean charts, send them, and everyone learns their parts—versus getting together and rehearsing and coming up with something—it's just a more efficient way of working, plus you get to collaborate with people who may be farther away."

This enabled them to work with two brilliant musicians on the project: bassist **Freddy Quintero** and percussionist **Jean Christophe Leroi**. The two seasoned players helped bring exactly what the trio wanted in terms of Latin expertise, with Freddy a native Venezuelan and experienced salsa player, and Jean possessing an encyclopedic knowledge of Cuban folkloric drumming.

With the help of these two additional musicians, *Regalito* is a delight from start to finish. Nonetheless, Mitch and Eric were in complete agreement about the album's highlight, "Cascabeles," that is, Richard's arrangement of "Jingle Bells." Even though it was the last track they recorded that night, Richard pulled out an incredible piano take, described by Mitch as "this flight of improv that takes you to a sublime place, like an ascension," and Eric touted as "inarguably the strongest track on the album" for him personally.

This "little gift" promises to be one that keeps on giving once it releases on October 1, 2021. The trio hopes to gig the record as well, which would surely provide a boost of festive joy for this year's holiday season. With such a cross-cultural enterprise, the eight lively tracks are sure to capture the attention of people from all different backgrounds, proving yet again that music is truly the most universal language.

Los Asesinos · "Regalito" A Little Gift

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For more information on Los Asesinos, please visit: www.AFARmusic.com

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