

Campbell: New on CD

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- **Latin group seeks place in the sun**
'deSoL'

- deSoL (Curb)
- Rating: *** 1/2 (out of 5)

Rather than going off like a nuclear bomb, the Latin "explosion" in music has been more of a series of smaller, individual detonations set off in recent years by a resurgent Santana plus Shakira, Enrique Iglesias, Marc Anthony, Ricky Martin, Jennifer Lopez (to some degree), Los Lonely Boys and others.

The Asbury Park, N.J., band deSoL stands to ignite a little excitement of its own with its self-titled debut that blends influences reflecting the diverse heritages of the band members (whose roots trace beyond the United States to El Salvador, Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Peru and Portugal).

The deSoL sound is more like Santana and Los Lonely Boys than the group's more poppish contemporaries - there's even a strong flavor of "Oye Como Va" on the "deSoL" opening track, "Blanco y Negro." Yet the fluid mix of worldbeat-driven music is too slippery to pin down to, say, American-Afro-Cuban or Anglo-salsa.

Thanks especially to dual-percussionists Armando Cabrera and James Guerrero, deSoL deals out vibrant rhythms at nearly every turn, most notably on the tracks "Karma," "Chango" and "Amazed." Meanwhile, Andy Letke steps in with rollicking keyboards (particularly on "Urgency" and "My Affection"), and Rich Soto provides electrifying guitar (as on "Karma" and "Amazed") - the two musicians thus creating a distinctive Latin rock flavor for deSoL.

For his part, singer Albie Monterrosa doesn't have the strongest or most distinctive voice, but he never wavers in his role of endearing frontman as the group whips through its stylistic mash-up and drops into a mid-album sag where the songs are more breezy than riveting. In fact, on the charismatic closing track, "See Ya Again Soon," Monterrosa shifts into a passage from Bill Withers' "Lean on Me," and his band does, indeed, lean on the vocalist.

But usually the members of deSoL swing solidly together through shout-along choruses and tantalizing tempos.