

Rodriguez Cold fact (1970)

Album Review

By Trent Walker

In the early 1970's, a musician named Sixto Rodriguez made an album called *Cold fact* for his debut in the music industry, the songs are what Bob Dylan would call "finger pointin songs" or socially conscious rock, blues and folk with hints of psychedelic rock. It never caught on in part because the record label Sussex, which was distributed by Buddah Records; an AM radio powerhouse that had very little to no access to the FM spectrum which Rodriguez's music which it would of fit in better. He was shut out from the U.S audience, but in the Southern Hemisphere it caught on big time. The unique sound of the songs stuck in Australia and New Zealand to the degree that in 1979 and 1980. Rodriguez, Who had been playing dives, gay bars; strip clubs, and other out of the way corners of Detroit was able to tour in Australia playing for over 5,000 people. The real surprise, though, was in South Africa, where *Cold Fact* became a hit, but he did not find out until 1998 when his daughter found a website dedicated to him. Today the album is now accepted as a classic. It sold about 60,000 copies (very good for South Africa) but it was bootlegged many hundred more times.

The reason his music spread so widely was the lyrics which played as a sort of rebellious anthem and the people could relate to, it was mainly South Africans living under a strict cultural system, the music was too corrupting to be allowed into the

country, at the time it was a police state and with songs with lines like, "I wonder how many times you've had sex, and I wonder do you know who'll be next" which that song was scraped off by a sharp tool most of the time in an attempt for it to be censored, and never mind the drug-dealing references. It was very catchy and that caused listeners to circulate it amongst their friends. Ironically, the military was the most circulated place. As Rodriguez got on with his life *Cold Fact* slowly developed a life of its own picking up a huge word-of-mouth audience. Rodriguez was tracked down in 1998 when his daughter found a website dedicated to him and also when some South African fans found him while they were making a documentary called Searching for Sugarman (which I recommend watching) and they persuaded him to tour South Africa. His voice has the sorta nervy edge of mid Sixties Bob Dylan. The record is made up of tight short songs built on acoustic guitar, light drums and a bass, occasionally overlaid with strings or psychedelic flourishes. Lyrically Cold Fact is a classic work of songs written to address the late Sixties social gap issues which are still relevant today. They are inspired from the difficulty of 'connecting' with people that are all filtered through the prism of inner city Detroit. Despite the surface beauty of the songs it's a bit of a jittery record, half in love with the times and half in fear. Rodriguez is clearly a writer with a vision, and although it's impossible to rewind 40 years and give this record the status it should get, *Cold Fact* is a great record that deserves the acclaim it was denied at first. I think he should be up there with Bob Dylan and the other

great folk rock artists of the 1960's and 70's. I would recommend his record to anyone who likes folk, or rock or a mix of both. Its fair to say this album is a solid 8.5 to 9 out of 10.

Be sure to check out the documentary "Searching for sugar man"

