

David Sanchez

For David Sanchez, the journey began in Puerto Rico, where he was born in September 1968. Percussion were an early inspiration, as young Sanchez learned rhythms in the Puerto Rican and Cuban tradition. Sanchez took up the conga drum when he was eight, then turned to the saxophone at the age of 12. He grew up listening to a variety of music, the earliest of which included: Afro-Caribbean (through groups such as Irakere); danza, a percussive, folkloric music from Puerto Rico; European and Latin classical; and other traditional Latin music. "Later on, when I turned twelve, I began studying at a special school, La Escola Libra de Musica, and I studied there from seventh grade until my senior year in high school. And that's when I started playing saxophone. I was attracted by its sound but at the time, I preferred playing percussion."

In 1982, two years after he started playing the saxophone, David's sonic horizons broadened when his sister brought home two classic jazz records: a Miles Davis anthology, *Basic Miles*, which featured John Coltrane, and *Lady In Satin*, a 1958 recording of Billie Holiday with a string orchestra arranged and conducted by Ray Ellis. David's life changed, and he became an ardent jazz fan. "Little by little I wanted to play jazz, even though I didn't understand it," he says now.

Sanchez entered college in Puerto Rico, and considered a career in psychology, "but music was in my heart, and I auditioned for Berklee and Rutgers. Rutgers offered a better scholarship, and was near New York, which was exactly what I wanted." Soon Sanchez was involved with a number of new collaborators like pianist Danilo Perez, and old friends such as percussionist Giovanni Hidalgo and trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda. "that led to a gig with pianist Eddie Palmieri, which was a great learning experience. Eddie's on the cutting edge, he's not pure Latin or pure jazz. He crosses over into a lot of areas, like world music - so you can't really categorize his music. It was a great way to meet other musicians, and that was the link to Paquito D'Rivera, Claudio Roditi, and eventually, to Dizzy Gillespie."

In 1990, David came to the attention of Dizzy Gillespie, who took him under his wing and invited him to join his Grammy Award-winning United Nation Orchestra. His tenure with Dizzy Gillespie hastened his musical growth and served to reinforce his convictions about the importance of multi-cultural connections.

From then until illness ended Dizzy's playing career in mid 1992, Sanchez performed with his mentor regularly. He participated in the historic month long "Dizzy's Diamond Jubilee" at New York's Blue Note, and was featured on the celebrated live recording "To Bird With Love". Sanchez also performed in almost all of the gala tribute concerts presented in honor of his mentor's 75th birthday year throughout Europe and the U.S., playing alongside a many of the jazz world's most revered luminaries.

In emerging from Dizzy Gillespie's musical universe, Sanchez has been branching out all over the jazz world, putting down roots with some of its most influential artists. Sanchez has gained invaluable experience through his association with, and as a founding member of, Slide Hampton's JazzMasters, with which he continues to perform. He has also performed with such notables as Kenny Barron, Jimmy Heath, Jerome Richardson, Hank Jones, Ray Drummond, McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones among others. In 1997, he performed with Roy Hargrove's all-star Afro-Cuban project "Crisol", and with Cuban pianist Chucho Valdes. However, Sanchez' first love is his own quintet, which he works with regularly since 1994, both the U.S. and overseas.

Sanchez recently placed in the top ten among tenor sax players in the Downbeat Reader's Poll. This is hardly surprise news to those who have observed him in action, people like Dizzy Gillespie who gave the young Sanchez his personal "Seal of approval." With Gillespie's encouragement and support, Sanchez developed a signature perspective and saxophone sound that reaches a new level of translucent resonance on his album "Sketches Of Dreams" (Columbia). "Street Scenes", Sanchez' third album for Columbia, carries on where "The Departure" and "Sketches Of Dreams" left off. It is a joyous celebration of the rhythmic and melodic diversity that distinguishes the cultures of the Western hemisphere. His fourth CD for Columbia "Obsession" (release May '98) stretches into fertile new territory, emphasizing different facets of the Jazz/Latin duality that drives his music. The recording features Sanchez' quintet performing "classics" by renowned Latin composers Pedro Flores, Bobby Capo, Rafael Hernandez (Puerto Rico); Joyce, Antonio Carlos Jobim (Brazil), Jose Dlores Quinones (Cuba) and Ray Bryant - augmented on 5 selections by a 10 piece chamber ensemble, with arrangements by Carlos Franzetti.

Sanchez weaves the multi-cultural threads of North and Latin American cultures into a colorful musical tapestry, the common ground being the spirit of the drum. Sanchez' robust sound, taut melodic focus and stirring rhythmic articulation reflect a talent wise beyond his years. His sense of originality transcends mere technical concerns. Sanchez is searching for fresh ways to enrich the jazz vocabulary.

"I wanted to be in touch with my roots," says Sanchez, "which come from Latin America. I believe that Latin jazz was born in the U.S., but I also believe that we are really one: North America, South America, the Caribbean. There are native people in these places who are related to each other. I'm trying to put that together in my music, trying to get in touch with the unity of it all while I integrate the stylistic elements from the different regions."

In late 1991, Dizzy Gillespie spoke glowingly of his latest protege, "There's a young tenor player from Puerto Rico - the youngest member of the United Nation Orchestra - ... David Sanchez, good, very reserved mind, very old mind, knows his changes, knows where he's going and knows where he's coming from."

Unarguably one of the most important and exciting young artists to emerge on the jazz scene in recent years, Sanchez' uncommon talent, dedication and personal charisma will assuredly place him among the giants of jazz in the coming years.