

David Sánchez Bio



David Sánchez in San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia. Photo by Daniella Murillo

GRAMMY® award-winner David Sánchez is recognized around the world as one of the finest saxophonists of his generation. His mastery of the instrument is undeniable and his sound unmistakable. Combine that with Sánchez's deep-seated knowledge of both Jazz and Latin music, and the traditions that mold them, and the results are extraordinary.

In a review, world-renowned jazz writer and critic Howard Reich saluted the bandleader, saying, "Sánchez's prowess on saxophone is matched by the intellectual depth of his concept and compositions." Reich has also noted, "Technically, tonally and creatively, he seems to have it all. Recordings such as "The Departure" (1994), "Sketches of Dreams" (1995), "Obsesión" (1998) and "Cultural Survival" (2008) showed Sánchez merging jazz syntax with the musical dialects of his native Puerto Rico and other Caribbean and Latin American sources."

The influences of Puerto Rican folkloric music can be clearly heard in his debut album, "The Departure" (1994), as well as "Street Scenes" (1996). Strains of Bomba and Plena are also

evident on "Obsesión" (1998) and "Melaza" (2000), both produced by the great saxophonist Branford Marsalis, as well as "Travesía" (2001), Sánchez's first entirely self-produced recording.

Another recording, "Coral," would earn David his fifth GRAMMY® award nomination and his first Latin Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Album in 2005. This album features orchestrations and arrangements by prolific Argentine composer Carlos Franzetti with the City of Prague Philharmonic. The album showcases compositions by Hector Villa-Lobos, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Alberto Ginastera, Franzetti and Sánchez. AllMusic.com observes, "Sánchez is poised to take his place among the great jazz musicians who continue to offer important personal and musical insights to their audiences." "Coral" is a necessity for any jazz or classical record collection."

"Cultural Survival", David's 2008 debut on Concord Records, earned the artist his sixth GRAMMY® award nomination. Two years later, Sánchez, Stefon Harris, and Christian Scott came together for the "Ninety Miles Project." The successful album and documentary film were recorded in Havana and featured the three bandleaders and some of Cuba's finest musicians.

JAZZ Times music writer Michael J. West noted, "The saxophonist is the real star: He's exquisite on "The Forgotten Ones," a ballad duet with Harris, and provides romance on "This Too" and dark intrigue on the album's one new tune, "Paradise Found." The project would later become The Ninety Miles Band, where Harris and Sánchez would further develop their unique musical partnership.

Sánchez continues to tour the world as a bandleader, bringing his mix of mainstream jazz with Pan-African influences to global audiences. Most lately, he finalized his much anticipated recording, "Carib" (2019), featuring original compositions inspired by melodies and rhythms coming from the Afro-Puerto Rican and Haitian traditions. Two pieces on this recording, "Canto" and "Fernando's Theme", are featured in the soundtrack of the film "Windows on The World" by Robert Mailer Anderson.

At the same time, he is also a member of the SFJazz Collective, an all-star octet representing the SFJAZZ institution. The Collective has been one of the most prolific ensembles of the last decade. It's recognized for its stellar musicians, groundbreaking compositions, and innovative takes on the music of some of the world's most influential artists. Sánchez's unique musical sensibility can be traced to his home, Puerto Rico, where he began playing percussion and drums at age 8. He migrated to tenor saxophone a few years later. While a

scholar at the prestigious La Escuela Libre de Música in San Juan, he took up the flute, clarinet, and soprano saxophone with teachers Angel Marrero and Leslie López. The Bomba and Plena rhythms of his homeland, along with Cuban, Caribbean, and Brazilian traditions, were among the biggest influences on Sanchez's early taste in music. Soon, jazz masters such as Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon, and John Coltrane would command his ear and his imagination. Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Wayne Shorter and Joe Henderson have also been major influences. In 1988, Sánchez auditioned for and gained a music scholarship at Rutgers University. He articulates, "studying with masters such as Kenny Barron, Ted Dunbar, Larry Ridley, among others, was a true blessing."

He was soon immersed in New York's swirling Jazz scene and was quickly recruited to tour with piano giant and mentor Eddie Palmieri. He also performed with Hilton Ruiz and Claudio Roditi, who brought Sánchez to the attention of Jazz legend Dizzy Gillespie. In 1991, Gillespie invited the young saxophonist to join his "Live the Future" tour with Miriam Makeba. Later, having the opportunity to be a part of Gillespie's recording, "Live At The Blue Note" Sánchez has also performed and recorded with Jazz Master and mentor Kenny Barron (album "The Spirit Song"), Roy Haynes(album "Praise"), Charlie Haden (Grammy award winner album "Nocturne"), Roy Hargrove (Grammy award winner Album "Crisol"), Pat Metheny, Lalo Schiffrin, Danilo Perez, Tom Harrell, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Kenny Werner, and had the opportunity to perform with the legendary drummer Elvin Jones.

David Sánchez is also "Maestro Sánchez" to students at the Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico, where, after a decade of teaching, he has proven to be a compelling presence with students and is in demand for workshops and master classes worldwide. Among them, in the US, Georgia State University School of Music faculty as the Artist in Residence in the Jazz Studies program from 2018 to 2024, Berklee Global Institute, North Texas University, Peabody Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music, Temple University, Indiana University's School of Music, Stanford University, Emory University. Internationally, in Sao Paulo, Brazil; Paris, France; Barcelona, Spain; Lopud, Croatia.

Sánchez's passion for teaching and sharing his art with up-and-coming musicians is palpable. He says, "It gives me such tremendous joy seeing so much talent out there. It's a true honor to be a part of various educational institutions that provide a solid platform to help students while they strive to find their own voices. I am very optimistic and look ahead to music's future."

In 2017, he took his passion for education a step further by helping to establish a groundbreaking program at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music: The RJAM (Roots, Jazz,

and American Music), where he's currently a faculty member. Such work, he says, 'gives me great satisfaction. At the same time, it's a challenge because part of my responsibility is to provide the students with guidance by sharing my experiences but also understanding that it's their own journey. In the process, as instructors, we also learn'.