



## **DANIEL SUSNJAR**

### **DRUMMER, PERCUSSIONIST, COMPOSER, PRODUCER AND EDUCATOR**

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Daniel Susnjar is a Western Australian drummer/composer/producer/educator known internationally for his expertise in the field of Afro-Peruvian Jazz. He has performed and recorded with world-renowned artists including Steve Miller, Gretchen Parlato, Greg Osby, Peter Bernstein, Sam Rivers, Danilo Perez, Dave Douglas, Dr G Yunupingu, Chris Potter, Hossam Ramzy, Mark O'Connor, Brian Lynch, Nicole Henry, Gary Burton, Pharrell Williams, Victor Wooten, Patti Austin, Steve Bailey, Ky-Mani Marley, Martin Bejerano, Gloria Gaynor, Geoffrey Keezer, Carmen Bradford, Wycliffe Gordon, Sammy Figueroa, Jon Secada, Kevin Mahogany, Paul Bollenback, Take 6, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Arturo Sandoval, to name a few.

Alongside jazz legends Chick Corea, Bobby McFerrin, Terence Blanchard and Dave Grusin, he is featured prominently on the 2014 Sony CD/DVD release "Jazz and the Philharmonic."

As director of the Daniel Susnjar Afro-Peruvian Jazz Group, he has released three critically-acclaimed albums ("Su Su Nje" in 2014, "Moth to a Flame" in 2016 and "Spark" in 2018), toured throughout Australia and the USA, and has won multiple awards including the 2019 and 2017 APRA/AMCOS Art Music WA State Awards, the 2017 and 2016 WAM awards for Best Jazz Act, the 2018 and 2016 WAM awards for Best Drummer/Percussionist, the 2015 Australian Jazz Bell Awards (2 categories) and the 2015 WAM Jazz Song of the Year award. His ensemble appeared to a capacity audience at the 2018 Melbourne International Jazz festival and was invited to perform at the 2017 Percussive Arts Society International Conference (Indianapolis, IN, USA) and the 2016 Jazz Education Network Conference (Louisville, KY, USA). Daniel undertook Australian national tours with his ensemble in March/April 2017, April 2016 and December 2016, and was a finalist for the 2019 and 2017 APRA Professional Development Awards.

As a founding member of Australian jazz group Speedball, Daniel performed at the 2017 Sydney and Melbourne International Jazz Festivals – launching their 2017 debut album "We

Have Moved” (Best Australian Jazz Song of the Year winner at the 2018 Australian Jazz Bell Awards), and touring throughout Australia to capacity audiences in 2018. Also in 2018, Daniel was invited to perform alongside percussion legend Alex Acuña at the world-renowned Australian Ultimate Drummers Weekend.

Daniel’s solo drum improvisations can be heard in the James Bogle-directed documentary film “Whiteley,” winner in 4 categories at the 2017 Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Awards, and winner of the 2017 APRA/AMCOS Screen Music Award for “Best Music for a Documentary.” In 2020, Daniel contributed solo drums and cajon for the “Be Healthy, Be Anything” – Derby Aboriginal Health Service Youth Health campaign – in collaboration with Rhythm Content and composer Andrew Wright.

From 2008-2013, Daniel earned his Doctoral and Masters degrees from the University of Miami Frost School of Music – where he was a teaching assistant, full scholarship student, Henry Mancini Institute fellow, and drummer for the prestigious Frost Concert Jazz Band. His intensive research into Afro-Peruvian Jazz drumming during this time included performances and in-depth study throughout the Caribbean Islands, Peru and the USA – culminating in the publication of his Doctoral dissertation entitled “A Methodology for the Application of Afro-Peruvian Rhythms to the Drumset for Use in a Contemporary Jazz Setting.”

Daniel relocated back to Australia following the completion of his Doctoral studies, and performed at the 2013 Wangaratta Jazz and Blues Festival with guitarist Paul Bollenback (USA). He was featured heavily at the 2014 Perth International Jazz Festival with the Daniel Susnjar Afro-Peruvian Jazz Group, as well as with renowned American jazz guitarist Peter Bernstein (recorded live for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio program “Jazztrack”). Daniel returned to the USA in late 2014 to produce, perform and compose for Peruvian trumpeter Gabriel Alegria’s album “10” (featuring legendary bass legend Ron Carter) – winner of New York City Jazz Record’s 2015 Latin Jazz Album of the Year award.

In 2015, Daniel visited the USA for activities including national touring with the Gabriel Alegria Afro-Peruvian Sextet, recording/performing with the Laura Andrea Afro-Peruvian Jazz Orchestra for Peruvian Independence Day at Symphony Space (New York City), and teaching at the Brubeck Institute Summer Jazz Colony in Stockton, CA. Also in 2015, he world-premiered a 75-minute Afro-Peruvian jazz big band suite commissioned by the Western Australian Youth Jazz Orchestra entitled “Música Criolla,” and performed to rave reviews at the 2015 Wangaratta Jazz and Blues Festival with the Daniel Susnjar Afro-Peruvian Jazz Group.

Daniel performed on the Grammy-nominated album “An Evening with Dave Grusin,” won the 2010 Downbeat Student Award for Best Collegiate Large Ensemble, and won the 2009 ABC Limelight Award for best jazz performance. He was nominated for the Freedman Jazz Fellowship Award in 2014 and 2015, the 2015 Western Australian Music Industry Award for Best Jazz Musician, and was a finalist for the 2017 APRA/AMCOS Art Music Award for Excellence in Jazz.

The 2008 Perth Jazz Society commission was awarded to Daniel for the creation of a 60-minute original work influenced by ethnic music from Spain, Mali, Hungary and Egypt called "Stories from Around the Globe" – broadcast live for ABC "Jazztrack." He has also appeared as a featured artist multiple times on ABC's nationally broadcast program "The Music Show."

Daniel has performed with the Miami Symphony Orchestra, the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra, the Frost Symphony Orchestra, the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra and the Western Australian Youth Jazz Orchestra Composer's Ensemble – performing at the 2000 Sydney Olympics Arts Festival.

At age 17, Daniel won Best Drum Soloist in Western Australia at Drum Mania IV in 1998, and was awarded runner-up at Australia's Best Up and Coming Drummer Competition in 2002. Daniel has studied with drumming greats including Bernard Purdie, Keith Carlock, Hugo Alcazar, Kendrick Scott, Carl Allen, Clarence Penn, Dom Famularo, John Riley, Ari Hoenig, Billy Ward, Gary Husband, Mark Mondesir, Steve Rucker, Terepai Richmond, Simon Barker, Chris Tarr, Frank Gibson Jr. and Hossam Ramzy.

As an educator, he has tutored and conducted workshops at high-profile educational institutions in Australia and the USA including the New York University Steinhardt School of Music, the University of Miami Frost School of Music, the Brubeck Summer Jazz Colony at the University of the Pacific (Stockton, CA, USA), New World School for the Arts (Miami, FL, USA), the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, the Australian National University Open School of Music (Canberra), the Sir Zelman Cohen School of Music at Monash University (Melbourne), the Queensland Conservatorium of Music at Griffith University (Brisbane), the James Morrison Academy of Music (Mount Gambier, South Australia) and the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Daniel is featured in issues #78, #81 and #91 of DrumsScene magazine, where he describes in detail his Afro-Peruvian drumming approach on selected tracks from his albums "Su Su Nje" and "Moth to a Flame," as well as his vast performance and education experiences in the USA.

He holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Jazz Performance from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, where he has been an adjunct faculty member since 2006 and directs the WAAPA Afro-Peruvian Ensemble (founded in 2017). Additional activities include teaching privately from his home studio, producing recordings for standout Western Australian artists, and composing relentlessly for his musical projects including the Daniel Susnjar Afro-Peruvian Jazz Group, Trisk, Speedball, Artefact Agency, Tribal Jury, Vista Needle, Noah's Ark, Helium and The Core.

#### **Media quotes –**

*"Susnjar radiates a joyful energy that infects not just the band members but the entire auditorium" – Sydney Morning Herald*

*The winners of Best Jazz Act at last year's WAM Awards brilliantly combined contemporary jazz with complex Afro-Peruvian rhythms to push the music into new areas of sound and texture. The talented seven-piece ensemble's playing and the soloing were of the highest quality, combining strong melodies, imaginative improvisation and solid grooves – The West Australian*

*Afro-Peruvian jazz, a rarity in Australia, is far more than just a Latin-style beat. Studied in the US and Peru by Perth drummer Daniel Susnjar, his Australian septet showed that the genre includes forceful rhythms and melodies – John McBeath – The Australian*

*"A brilliant breakout percussion display from Susnjar" John McBeath – The Australian*

*"Refreshing, danceable and lively" Euan Dixon –JazzViews.net*

*"Susnjar has created a fresh and bright thing" John Hardaker – AustralianJazz.Net*

*"Impossibly beautiful drumming and performance by the core ensemble and stellar guests" Raul Da Gama – Latin Jazz Network*

*"The Daniel Susnjar Afro-Peruvian Jazz Group's high energy performance was a highlight" – Australian Book Review*

*"The septet has the kind of polish that only comes from long hours of practice and from knowing your fellow performers inside out" – artshub.com.au*