

John Santos Bio

Four-time Grammy nominee, and US Artists Fontanals Fellow, JOHN SANTOS, is one of the foremost exponents of Afro-Latin music in the world today. He is known for his innovative use of traditional forms and instruments in combination with contemporary music, and has earned much respect and recognition as an educator, composer, and record and event producer. He has performed, recorded and studied with acknowledged masters of the Afro-Latin and Jazz idioms such as Cachao, Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Bebo Valdés, Lazaro Ros, Armando Peraza, Eddie Palmieri, Patato Valdés, Francisco Aguabella, Orestes Vilató, Rene López, Max Roach, Batacumbele, Steve Turre, John Faddis, Nestor Torres and Chocolate Armenteros. This experience has provided a solid foundation for Mr. Santos' current ground breaking work in bringing together styles, rhythms, concepts and artists from different generations. Born in San Francisco, California, November 1, 1955, he was raised in the Puerto Rican and Cape Verdean traditions of his family, surrounded by music. The fertile musical environment of the San Francisco Bay Area shaped his career in a unique way. His studies of Afro-Latin music have included several trips to New York, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Brazil and Colombia.

Mr. Santos is widely respected as one of the top writers, teachers and historians in the field and is a member of the Latin Jazz Advisory Committee of the Smithsonian Institution. He has conducted lectures, workshops and clinics in the Americas and Europe since 1973. He has contributed to the international magazines Percussive Notes, Modern Drummer, Modern Percussionist, and Latin Percussionist. The San Francisco Bay Area community in which he still lives and works has presented him with numerous awards and honors for artistic excellence and social dedication.

Mr. Santos is also a distinguished and creative multi-percussionist and recording artist. His diverse credits (in addition to those listed above) include: Bobby Hutcherson, Grupo Mezcla (Havana, Cuba), Lalo Schifrin, Irakere West, Santana, Yma Sumac, Linda Tillery, Cal Tjader, Danilo Perez, Ignacio Berroa, Omar Sosa, Jon Jang and Charlie Hunter. He was the director of the Orquesta Tipica Cienfuegos (1976-1980) and the award-winning Orquesta Batachanga (1981-1985). Mr. Santos founded and directed the GRAMMY-nominated Machete Ensemble from 1985 to 2006, a world-class Latin Jazz band of international renown. They recorded and released nine CDs during that time, mostly on Mr. Santos' Machete Records label. His current performing group is an exciting Latin Jazz Sextet under his own name.

John is an endorsee of Latin Percussion instruments, Remo drumheads, Sabian cymbals, Engelhart Metal Percussion, and Fat Conga Cajones.