

A Brief History of Danilo Perez

Written by Jimmie Jones

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Danilo Perez was born in Panama in 1966. His father, also called Danilo, was a singer. At the age of three, Danilo would play bongos when attending his father's rehearsals. He took up the guitar at the age of five and by the time he was 10, he was studying piano at the National Conservatory in Panama. While growing up in Panama, in addition to hearing all types of Latin American and classical music, a neighbor turned him on to American jazz with his record collection.

In 1984, at the age of 18, Danilo accepted an electrical-engineering scholarship to attend Indiana University in Pennsylvania. But a year later, he decided that he wanted to be a pianist and began to attend the Berklee College of Music. For a while, he played salsa and merengue gigs around Boston.

Danilo's jazz-playing ability soon got him a gig with the world-renowned jazz singer Jon Hendricks, which lasted from 1986 to 1988. His best jazz education came from playing with Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Orchestra from 1989 to 1992. "Dizzy taught me about economy, not to play everything I know and to pace myself," Perez has said.

In 1993, Danilo began touring the world with a trio and as a soloist. He has been featured in special projects with numerous jazz greats, such as Wynton Marsalis, Wayne Shorter, Steve Lacy, Gary Burton, Roy Haynes, and Jack DeJohnette.

Danilo's recordings as a leader – *The Journey*, *PanaMonk* (dedicated to Thelonious Monk), *Central Avenue*

, and

Motherland

– have been highly praised by critics. He has graced the covers of

Downbeat

,

Jazziz

,

Jazz Hot

, and

Northeastern Performer

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. Danilo is currently a faculty member of the New England Conservatory of Music.