

Susie Hansen -- Bio

Electric violinist Susie Hansen plays fiery Latin jazz and salsa, creating music that brings audiences to their feet dancing in the aisles. Susie and her Los Angeles-based band have been acclaimed by many critics, such as Phil Elwood from the San Francisco Examiner who described them this way: "It's a sizzling, swinging Salsa band. Hansen can solo as if her bow was afire. The whole room was jumpin' for joy."

The Chicago native is a well-established jazz musician, and she has developed a unique and energetic Latin jazz style that features her electric violin as the lead instrument. She draws on various forms of jazz, traditional Latin music, and Afro-Cuban rhythms. Combining her interpretation of Cuban charanga, a predecessor of salsa featuring violin, with the compelling harmonies of straight-ahead jazz, Susie "creates a brand of music that is as physically moving as it is intellectually stimulating," according to Don Heckman of the Los Angeles Times. Her band's all-star cast features Daniel Castillo on lead vocals and congas, Kaspar Abbo on lead vocals and electric guitar, and Joe Rotondi on piano, along with other great musicians.

According to Oscar Abadia, KLVE-FM, radio K-Love in Los Angeles, "Susie Hansen is the greatest salsa violinist in America." She has been featured as a soloist with Orquesta Los Van Van, Cuba's premier dance orchestra, both in Havana, Cuba, and in Los Angeles. She has also performed with Orquesta Aragon, the world's most acclaimed Cuban charanga ensemble.

Hansen began studying classical violin at the age of six with her father, James Hansen, a violinist for 38 years in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. When she moved to Boston for graduate school, Eric Rosenblith, the string department chair at the New England Conservatory of Music, took her on as a student, while she also studied bebop with legendary jazz instructor Charlie Banacos. During this time, she pursued an education in math and computer science, ultimately earning two masters degrees in engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). But after graduation, her musical career took precedence.

Moving back to Chicago, Susie formed her own jazz group in 1982, which she led for several years. For two years her ensemble was the featured Tuesday night band at Chicago's internationally known Green Mill jazz club. Then one day in 1986, after performing a successful concert for the Taste of Chicago in Chicago's Grant Park, she was invited by Victor Parra, leader of the Mambo Express All-Stars, to replace the violinist in his band, and she quickly discovered her passion for Latin jazz. When she moved to Los Angeles in 1988, she embarked on an in-depth study of everything and anything to do with Latin music. As can be seen from the extensive critical acclaim she has received, Susie has succeeded in turning the heads of even the most skeptical. As Mark Holston wrote in JAZZIZ Magazine, "her violin speaks the language of Latin jazz with total fluency."

A long-time favorite in Los Angeles, Susie and her band play 100 to 150 live performances each year, including such events as the Playboy Jazz Festival, Fiesta Broadway, San Jose Jazz Festival, LA Salsa Festival and Newport Beach Jazz Festival. She has toured nationally with her band, and has performed with Tito Puente, Giovanni Hidalgo, Paquito d'Rivera, Orquesta Broadway, Vikki Carr, Jose Rizo's Jazz on the Latin Side All-Stars, Orquesta Aragon, El Gran Combo, Sonora Ponceña, and Los Van Van.

Susie is a recording artist on Jazz Caliente Records with three releases, *Representante de la Salsa*, *The Salsa Never Ends* and *Solo Flight*. Susie's music receives airplay in the United States, Europe, South America and Asia. Spins of her most popular songs can be heard from dance DJs throughout the world.