

SUSIE HANSEN: THE ORIGINAL QUEEN OF THE LATIN VIOLIN

By Rudy Mangual

Violinist/bandleader Susie Hansen is a long-time favorite in Los Angeles, where she conducts an average of 150 live performances per year. A native of Chicago, Hansen relocated to Los Angeles in 1988 to pursue her Latin music career. She is currently celebrating the twentieth anniversary of her band, as well as the release of her third CD, titled *Representante de la Salsa*. **This well-established artist has developed a trademark style that features her electric violin as the lead melodic instrument of a powerhouse ensemble. Drawing from various forms of jazz and Afro-Caribbean rhythms, Hansen and her band play hardcore salsa and Latin jazz guaranteed to make any audience get up and move.** As Susie states: "We aim for the feet!"

Phil Elwood of the San Francisco Examiner described the band as follows: "It's a sizzling, swinging salsa band. Hansen can solo as if her bow was afire. The whole room was jumpin' for joy." Don Heckman wrote in the Los Angeles Times, "Hansen is a ball of energy, creating an atmosphere of high-voltage excitement." Mark Holston declared in *Jazziz Magazine*, "Hansen's violin speaks the language of Latin jazz with total fluency." And in 2004, *Latin Beat Magazine's* own Nelson Rodríguez selected Hansen's CD *Solo Flight* as one of the Top 100 Independent Latin Jazz Recordings.

A performance by the Susie Hansen Latin Band includes familiar and traditional Spanish-language songs, original salsa and Latin jazz scores, Latin-style interpretations of jazz standards, salsa selections with English lyrics, and traditional Cuban charanga music. Aside from having performed in all the major popular venues throughout Southern California, the Susie Hansen Latin Band has also headlined at events such as the Playboy Jazz Festival, Fiesta Broadway, the San José Jazz Festival and the Newport Beach Jazz Festival. Hansen has also toured nationally with her band, and she has performed and/or recorded with Tito Puente, Los Van Van, Giovanni Hidalgo, Vikki Carr, Orquesta Aragón, Paquito D'Rivera, Francisco Aguabella, El Gran Combo, Orquesta Broadway, Sonora Ponceña, and Rachel Z, among others. The Susie Hansen Latin Band includes the following core members: George Balmaseda (vocals), Joe Rotondi, Jr. (piano), René Camacho (bass), and percussionists Jimmy Branly, Joey de León, Jr., Tiki Pasillas and Arnie Silva. Hansen's two previous recordings, *The Salsa Never Ends* and *Solo Flight*, were issued by her own independent label (*Jazz Caliente*) and charted very well with radio and club DJs throughout the world. The word out is that the Susie Hansen Latin Band's new CD, *Representante de la Salsa* (to be released in the summer of 2010) is on fire and tailor-made for salsa dancers. *Latin Beat Magazine* salutes and congratulates the talents and efforts of this amazing bandleader that calls Los Angeles home —Susie Hansen, the L.A. Queen of the Latin Violin.

