

Damien Masterson: World Jazz for Many Beats

“VERSATILE” is the first word that comes to mind when you hear harmonica virtuoso Damien Masterson. Leaping seamlessly from Brazilian samba and Cuban jazz to American funk or Argentine tango is all in a night’s work for Damien Masterson and his band. You might call it “world jazz.” As one critic explained, “Damien’s skill surpasses the limitations of any one musical genre.” Whatever style he’s playing, you’ll find it grounded in solid technique and served up with a spirit of pure fun.

At 31, the Bay Area native has been dubbed “Toots Thielemans with soul.” Pleasing jazz fans from Yoshi’s and Kimball’s East in the Bay Area to venues throughout the West, Damien and Intercambio deliver solid musicianship, fine original tunes and festive good humor.

- **A Precarious Start:** Born in Berkeley, CA in 1970, Damien spent his childhood shuffling between relatives, communes and foster homes—a total of 22 residences. After attending nine junior high and high schools, he followed the path of many kids with a transient upbringing, dropping out of school and into drugs and alcohol at 14.
- **Turning Point:** At 15, Damien’s life took an upward turn when he met Altaneze Taylor, founder of Bright Moments Music Lovers Club in San Francisco. Influenced by blues masters Sonny Boy Williamson, Little Walter and Sonny Terry, he had begun playing a harmonica someone gave him. “I could only play three notes at the time,” he confesses. Through Bright Moments, he met and studied with professional musicians and learned about jazz history. He was given an alto saxophone and later applied the theory he learned in sax lessons to chromatic and diatonic harmonicas.
- **Paying Dues:** The discipline of music lessons helped Damien complete drug treatment and return to school—two years at Laney College studying with Elvo D’amante, Ed Kelley and Jay Lehman, then a transfer to Cal State Hayward’s foreign exchange program (“*intercambio*”). For the next two and a half years, he studied traditional Brazilian *Samba* and *Choro* music in Sao Paulo, playing some of Brazil’s top jazz venues and appearing as a featured player on Zerro Santos’ 1993 release, *Santos Big Band*.
- **Debut Release Wows Critics:** Damien returned from Brazil to play with the Bay Area’s best Brazilian and jazz names while composing an impressive canon of original songs. In 1996, he released the Latin-inspired *Intercambio* CD on his own Good Omen label to critical acclaim

“A delightful solo debut. This small label effort is a certified treasure.”—Jazziz Magazine

*“Damien shines on this exceptional...debut disc like the sun glistening over Sugarloaf Mountain.”
—Chuy Verela, East Bay Express*

“What a delightful surprise it is to see and hear Damien and his swinging Latin jazz-funk band. He’s a remarkably versatile player.”—Philip Ellwood, San Francisco Chronicle

“Damien can rip through a melody or express a note. A rare talent.”—Songwriter’s Monthly

In 1999, after nine visits to Cuba, Damien recorded *Cubacambio* in Havana. Released by Good Omen, the lively disc combines his passion for world music, jazz and pop and features some stellar performances by local musicians backing up Damien’s harmonica and tenor sax.

Catch Damien Live!

No disc can capture the excitement of seeing Damien and Intercambio in a live performance. Be sure to catch the “world jazz” ensemble at their next venue! You can find a schedule at www.goodomen.net.

(REVERSE SIDE)

Discography: Damien Masterson

Damien, *Cubacambio*, 1999

Recorded in Havana, Cuba, featuring Damien on tenor sax and harmonica on a wonderful meld of Western pop and Afro-Cuban rhythms.

Spacetime Continuum, *Astral Werks*, 1999

On the cutting edge of electronic music is Jonah Sharp, a.k.a. "Spacetime Continuum." Damien is featured on tenor sax and chromatic harmonica. He has also performed live with Jonah, opening for Carl Craig, Todd Terry and Fatboy Slim.

Kitty Margolis, *Madkat with a Twist*, 1997

With the legendary Charles Brown, featuring Damien on "Wouldn't It Be Lovely?"

Damien and Intercambio, *Intercambio*, 1996

Latin-influenced 1996 disc released after Damien's return to the U.S.—the first on his own Good Omen label. Features an all-star lineup of Bay Area musicians—Marcos Silva, Mike Marshall, Celso Alberti & Sandy Cressman.

Zerro Santos Big Band, *Sao Paulo*, 1993

Damien on chromatic harmonica and 2nd tenor sax with Brazilian bassist Zerro Santos' 20-piece ensemble.

Rad., *Higher Plane*, 1997

Featured on chromatic harmonica on the phenomenal singer/composer/multi-instrumentalist Rosanne Delamonta-Kirsch's third release.

Damien Masterson, *Masterson Jazz Quartet*, (1991)

First self-produced recording, featuring Bay Area legend Ed Kelley on piano, Troy Lampkin and Carl Chelette on bass, Mark Lignelle on drums and Damien on tenor sax and chromatic and diatonic harmonicas. Includes Damien's first recorded original, "D's Position." Recorded live at Live Oak Studios, Berkeley.

Performances

Damien has performed solo and as a sideman at the following venues and festivals:

Biscuits 'n Blues	Jupiter
Blues on Whyte, Edmonton, Canada.	Kimball's San Francisco
Blues Cruise '98	Kimball's East
Bruno's	Lou's Pier 47
Djavan – (Opening act, 1996)	Paragon
Elbo Room, San Francisco	Russian River Jazz Festival
Enrico's	San Jose Jazz Festival
Festival on the Lake, Oakland	Sol Y Luna
Fillmore Street Jazz Festival	Sun Valley, Idaho
Gordon Biersch Brewery, San Francisco & San Jose	The Jazz Store
Harry Denton's	Yoshi's

Damien has also worked with Ed Bogus Productions, Brian Morgan, Ricky Concepcion (Menudo) and Prince/SF productions.