

Don Grusin Biography Highlights

Don Grusin was born and raised in Colorado. While his older brother Dave was a serious student of piano and composition, Don did play piano as a kid, required in the Grusin household, but basketball and track predominated, thinking that one good piano player per family seemed about right. That thinking changed a little later. After a bachelor degree in Sociology, Don gravitated to the field of economics and received a Masters degree from University of Colorado, after which he received a Fulbright Fellowship to teach at the Autonomous University in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. He returned to the states to teach part-time at Foothill College in the San Francisco Bay area, gradually investing more time in music and joined Pete Escovedo and his daughter, Sheila E., in the band Azteca. It was Quincy Jones who encouraged Don to give music his full-time interest. And so he moved to Los Angeles in the mid 70's.

With a long and illustrious musical dossier, Don Grusin was baptized in the music business early on, having played with jazz greats Clark Terry, Zoot Sims, Carl Fontana, and Gary Burton in his home based jazz club in Denver. His musical interests picked up steam after touring Japan and playing on records for Quincy Jones, Billy Eckstein, Peggy Lee, Tom Scott, Lee Ritenour, Sergio Mendez, Sadao Watanabe, Milton Nascimento, Gilberto Gil, Dori Caymmi, Patti Austin, and his brother Dave. He played on dozens of films and composed the score for the movie *Lucas* with his brother.

Don was the creative sparkplug for the acclaimed fusion ensemble *Friendship* and has recorded fifteen solo albums as well as producing and arranging many more, including the Grammy-winning *Musician* for Ernie Watts, and the 2004 Grammy nominated DVD and CD, *the Hang*.

He has a wide international following having played, composed, arranged, and produced for many artists in the US, Japan, Venezuela, UK, and Brazil. As an example, in 1999 Don and Frank Quintero produced a 3-CD, 36-artist Tribute to Latin American Music entitled *Tocando Tierra*, recorded in Havana, Caracas; Los Angeles, Miami, Rio de Janeiro, and Dominican Republic with Roger Nichols as the engineer.

In 2000 he produced Bill Sharpe's (of the famous UK band Shakatak) CD *State of the Heart* and *Candlelight*, a piano vocal duet with singer Leon Ware.

Don's first solo piano album *Old Friends and Relatives* has been re-issued in summer 2006 by VideoArtsMusic in Japan. And a new Christmas CD, co-produced with Natali Rene, co-written with Richard Rudolph, entitled *Better than Christmas*, released in 2005, can be found on i-Tunes, as can many of his CD's.

An exciting new release entitled *Geography* also co-written and produced by fellow keyboardist Bill Sharpe, with many new artists from the UK, Iceland, Germany and the US, has just been released by JVC records in Japan, and will be available on line soon at <http://www.popjazz.com> as well as his own website <http://www.Dongrusin.com>.

Don has the opportunity to be involved in many international clinics, beyond purely music, both as a participant at many conferences including the Conference on World Affairs, and as a lecturer and clinician. Quite to his joyful surprise, he received The George Norlin award for distinguished achievement in spring 2006 from his alma mater, the University of Colorado at Boulder.

His tours take him to many international venues, e.g. the German Ruhr Klavier Piano Festival in summer 2006, as well as performances in Japan, and here in the US at the New Orleans Jazz Festival. Live performance is his main passion that accompanies a life's work composing and producing music for CDs DVDs film and TV. Luckily, Don has been invited to spend time with students and faculty at a growing number of institutions and universities...the happy result of which is to expand his own sense of new directions in the arts and in new models of spiritual consciousness.