

## Dan Storper: Putumayo World Music's CEO/Founder & Musical Nomad



When Dan Storper began the Putumayo World Music label in 1993, world music was limited in distribution and visibility in the United States. Now one can hear world music in television commercials, film soundtracks and other mainstream outlets on a daily basis. A hit world music album that may have previously sold only 15,000 copies today can sell hundreds of thousands of copies. Putumayo has sold more than 20 million CDs since it began, with 70 of its collections selling more than 100,000 copies each and several surpassing 400,000. World music has snuck into the mainstream in scores of countries. Dan Storper's passion has helped make this possible.

Storper majored in Latin American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. After graduating in 1973, he headed to Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia to visit the countries he'd studied. Putumayo, named after a beautiful river valley in Colombia, began as a hole-in-the-wall retail store in New York City in 1975. Dan filled his small shop with handicrafts and clothing collected in Latin America. The store received considerable media attention and by 1985, he found himself designing ethnic inspired contemporary clothing and supplying 600 other stores. Putumayo also had three successful New York stores patronized by such clients as Jane Fonda and Mia Farrow.

In 1991, Storper fell in love with world music when he happened upon a live concert of Kotoja, an African band from the San Francisco Bay area. He knew he had to get involved with this compelling music and put together Putumayo's first two world music collections in 1993. Dan was joined by his long-time friend Michael Kraus, who helped him launch the label and continues to work closely with Dan and the company.

After selling the Putumayo stores in 1997, Storper was able to focus fulltime on his goal of introducing people to other cultures through great world music. He now travels extensively and, with the support of ethnomusicologist Jacob Edgar, pays attention to and often researches the music scenes in Paris, Rio de Janeiro, New Orleans, Cape Town and other music centers. The opening of Putumayo Europe in the Netherlands in 2000 enabled the company to connect with the European music and retail scene. The expansion of the label's International division has also extended Putumayo's presence in South America, Asia, Africa and Oceania. The company now has offices in 15 countries.

Dan Storper's efforts have resulted in an independent label that has put out more than 150 CDs chronicling music from all over of the world. Every album includes songs previously unavailable outside their country of origin. He has pursued new ways of getting the word out about world music, being the first to market it in non-traditional venues such as cafés, health food stores, museums, bookstores and gift shops. Currently, more than 3,000 specialty retailers in the U.S. and thousands more around the world sell Putumayo CDs. He also co-hosts the Putumayo World Music Hour, the first commercially syndicated world music show now heard internationally on 170 commercial and non-commercial stations. Storper's commitment to helping communities in the countries where the music originates has led to the label contributing more than a million dollars to worthwhile non-profit organizations around the world.

Now in its second decade, Dan Storper's vision continues to grow and Putumayo looks forward to expanding into DVD's, book publishing and television.

**PUTUMAYO WORLD MUSIC**  
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