

MANU DIBANGO

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Who knows ? If he had not been born under the star sign of Sagittarius, he might never have had the temperament of a nomad and the taste for adventure.. Having been sent to Europe at the age of 15, he would have come back an academic success.

As it was, he was affected by musical grace in the very first years in the protestant temple. Little Manu on the road between Paris and Brussels, thanks to the masters he discovers (Armstrong, Ellington, Young, Parker...), wandering in places where jazz rips the nights apart voluptuously, a musician's soul was being formed.

Then the famous singer Kabasele arrived in Brussels from Zaïre (Democratic State of Congo), and proposes he join their group "African Jazz" to play Congolese music ; Manu takes up the challenge. He features in around forty records, then goes on tour near Kinshasa. This was to be a decisive step.

An idea was gradually taking shape during his life as a well-known musician : to invent a patchwork made up of rich and spirited conversations between jazz and African styles of music. Being of an eclectic mind, listening to the sounds of his era – in 1972 **Soul Makossa** was the first "French" hit to conquer the States – Manu takes secret pleasure in breaking the musical chapels, building bridges between continents and throwing passageways between tradition and the sounds of future.

The first in France to clear the land where the African wave was well established ; he produced albums and went on tour endlessly with warm, passionate enthusiasm and committed himself to humanitarian causes, giving a hand to young talents along the way. He used his time to create musical scores for African music and ever to write his own autobiography.

Time to call it a day ? Definitely not ! Manu is more than 70, but he's not yet ready to put down his saxophone..

(French version : Patrick Labesse)

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Manu DIBANGO, Saxophone, keyboards, vibraphone, marimba, vocals, composer, conductor.
Born 12 december 1933 in Douala (Cameroon).

Arrives in Marseille (France) in 1949. After attending Jules Ferry College in St Calais, he continues his studies in Reims, then Paris. He frequents Jazz clubs in both Paris and Brussels and gains recognition as an excellent musician.

- 1960 Independence movements in Africa. Manu returns to his continent where he visits many countries in French-speaking and English-speaking Africa as well as North Africa.
His talent as a jazzman enables him to appreciate a variety of sounds
From 1969 to 1970, he records several singles after spending 4 years as an organist and conductor with Nino Ferrer.
- 1972 Asked to compose the hymn of the 8th Africa Football Cup of which "Soul Makossa" is the Bside. He released his first album "O BOSO" : success of "Soul Makossa" which sells millions of copies all over the world.
- 1973 Triumph at the Olympia. In the USA, "Soul Makossa" is a smash hit : 40.000 people at the Yankee Stadium, 354 000 at Madison Square Garden in New York. Goes on tour with Fania All Stars. Manu becomes the link between Africa, Europe and America.
- 1974 **SUPER KUMBA** album
- 1975 **AFRICA DECLIC** album
- 1976 **MANU 76** album
- 1977 Manu composes soundtracks for motion pictures : "L'Herbe Sauvage" (Ivory Coast), "Ceddo" (Senegal), "Le Prix de la Liberté" (Cameroon).
- 1978 Manu discovers Jamaica. As a result, **GONE CLEAR** album is born with such prestigious Jamaican musicians as Robbie Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chung, Sly Dunbar, Willie Lindo, Ansel Collins, and no less prestigious American names such as Randy Guthrie and Ullanda Mac Cullouch. This records represents the Union of the three black Cultures ; the African, American and Jamaican.
- 1981 Musical culture of **GONE CLEAR** was so successful that Manu decides to use the same musicians for his **AMBASSADOR** album.
- 1982 Returns home, Manu goes back to afro-sound with **WAKA JUJU** album
- 1983 In his **SOFT AND SWEET** album, Manu revives the standards in a baritone sound
- 1984 **ABELE DANSE**, maxi single produced by Martin Meissonnier reaches the top of the charts in England, then **SURTENSION** album, whose sound was a sign of the years to come : Afro-Electric-Funk. Manu defines himself as both African and utopian : he founds the "Afro-European' concept.

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1985 In Holland, at the solidarity concert for Sahel, Manu is shocked by the image of starvation in Africa. On his return to Paris, he unites all the musicians he can for the record **TAM TAM POUR L'ETHIOPIE**. King Sunny Ade takes part by phone from Nigeria.

Bill Laswell, the New-York producer arrives in Paris with all his team to record the album **ELECTRIC AFRICA**. Herbie Hancock and Walli Badarou take part in it.

In May, with Sting, Barbara Hendricks, Seiji Osawa, Brandford Marsalis and other international stars, Manu takes part in a huge humanitarian demonstration organised at "Place du Trocadéro" (Paris), for the Human Rights day.

1986 **AFRIJAZZY** album. Anniversary records : Manu celebrates 30 years of music (Soul Paris Records/distr. Mélodie)

1987 **SEVENTIES** album. (Soul Paris Records/distr. Mélodie)

1988 **LA FETE A MANU** (Buda Records/distr. Adès). Live double LP recorded at the "Francofolies Festival" at La Rochelle-France. Tribute to Manu by Jean-Louis Foulquier, the festival director.

1989 **NEGROPOLITAINES** vol.1. Manu helps us discover new standards from the African continent.

For the French-Canadian film "Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer", soundtrack comes out.

Manu composes the music for the first African cartoon **KIMBO** broadcast on French television France3

1990 **POLYSONIC**, pure rap. This album shows his majors influence on contemporary musical trends (Fnac music-distr.WMD).

1991 **LIVE 91** record at "Printemps de Bourges" on 30 April, produced and recorded by Manu. Manu pays a tribute to Serge Gainsbourg interpreting "La Javanaise"

1992 **NEGROPOLITAINES vol.2** gets the Victoire (French music awards) of the best Instrumental album.

AUTO PORTRAIT, best of album celebrating the 20 anniversary of "Soul Makossa"

Weekly live music programme "**SALUT MANU**" hosted by Manu, on French television France3 (1992-1993)

1994 **WAKAFRIKA** or Africa on the road. Manu celebrates his 60th birthday and invites us at a musical safari. Youssou N'dour, King Sunny Ade, Peter Gabriel, Salif Keïta, Ray Phiri, Angélique Kidjo, Ladysmith Black Mambaza, Ray Lema, Geoffrey Oryma, Touré Kunda, Sinead O'Connor, Papa Wemba take part in this fabulous adventure.

1995 **LAMASTABASTANI** (Soul Paris Records/Melodie). As Manu was brought up in the tradition of Negro spirituals, it was a wonderful step back into his childhood, with the memories of his

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first years in the Protestant church where his mother was a choirleader. This album is a tribute to his music master Doumbè Eyango, to his parents and to his beloved wife. The album combines African Negro spirituals, rhythm and blues mixed with gospel songs.

1996 **PAPA GROOVE live 96**, recorded at the “Petit Journal Montparnasse in Paris (Afrovision/WMD)

Manu promotes French car Peugeot 406 all over Africa.

SAX & SPIRITUALS – LAMASTABASTANI (Soul Paris Records/Mélodie). This new version of the record made up of gospel music from African and elsewhere (first version in 95) includes 2 unreleased titles and 2 remixed titles, with guests appearance of the Cameroonian gospel singer Arbogaste Mbella-Ntone.

1997 **AFRICAN SOUL, The very best of Manu Dibango**

More than 20 years after the success of “soul Makossa”, Mercury France brings out the first “real” compilation by Manu, including some of his best hits such as “Dikalo”, “Big Blow” and of course “Soul Makossa”. “Senga Abele” whose “avant garde” sound announced the birth of Acid Jazz is also part of the album.

1997 **CUBAFRICA Manu Dibango & Cuarteto Patria**

A repertoire that even the Latin music newcomers hum along with a part of their national heritage, as well as the Cubans and their Africans accomplices ; lots of mellow sounds for an impulsive one. The black continent and the Caribbean island are still linked.

After “Salut Manu” live music programme on French television France3, Manu helps us to discover the African continent on France5. The purpose is to explore Africa beyond its touristics “clichés” and to get information about its geographical, economic and social aspects.

MANU SAFARI compilation (Soul MAKOSSA/Wagram Music)

WAKAFRIKA, New edition of the 1994 album with 2 new titles : “Wakafrika remix” and “Biko remix”.

1998 **MANU DIBANGO, Collection Légende**

12 unreleased titles.

1999 **LA PLANETE A MANU**, monthly live music programme on Muzzik, a cable television channel

MBOA’SU, Kamer feeling (JPS Production-Melodie)

A return to his roots, 10 years later. Manu records this album with the new generation of Cameroonian musicians and a few members of the Diaspora.

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- 2000 March, the 13rd, One great concert at the Olympia Hall in Paris
Manu returns to this mythic concert hall after 20 years. He proposes a “Music Hall Safari” accompanied with the London Community Gospel Choir led by the Reverend Bazil Meade.
- 2002 May : **BSIDES**. Manu plays Marimba drum.
- 2003 December, Manu celebrates his 70th birthday in Cameroon
“**AFRICADELIC**” (Mercury/Unicersal) a new album to celebrates the 30th anniversary of the famous “Ma-ma-ko Ma- ma- sa”.
- 2004 Celebration of Manu’s 5th decade of music throughout the year.

June : “**Voyage Anthologique**” (Mercury/Universal). A long box relating 3 decades (60’s, 70’s & 80’S) of Manu’s carreer.
- 2005 Manu composed the sound track of “**KIRIKOU & LES BETES SAUVAGES**” (Michel Ocelot-France), a cartoon based on an African tale. The film is very successful, more than 4bn people watched it in France since 7th Dec.
- 2006 Coming soon on May : Manu’s first and official DVD, recorded live at the Barbican Centre in London, with his “Maraboutik Big Band”, 14 musicians on stage including an incredible horn section.

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MORE ABOUT MANU

Books **TROIS KILOS DE CAFE**, Manu writes his autobiography with the help of Danièle Rouard, a journalist for the daily newspaper “Le Monde”.
French edition published by Le Seuil-France-
English edition published by The University of Chicago Press

Films **“SILENCES”**, a documentary produced by PRV/La Sept (1990). Manu retraces the important moment of his life and career, filmed by Béatrice Soulé.

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HONORARY DISTINCTIONS

1979 Oscar nomination (Hollywood) for the best album of the year 1973 (O BOSO album with “Soul Makossa), and nomination for the best instrumentalist

1977 Reputation established at the Olympia Hall ; he receives the trophy as a tribute to his international career from the French Minister of Co-operation.

1985 Honorary Citizen of Cortina d’Empezzo (Italy)

1986 Chevalier Des Arts et Lettres (France)

Honorary Citizen of Turin (Italy)

Senghor Honorary Trophy for his extraordinary contribution in the music field (author, composer, instrumentalist)

1988 Chevalier de l’Ordre et de la Valeur (Cameroon)

1989 “Genie de la Bastille” trophy of the Elf Foundation

Trophy of the Panafrican Circle of the International Institute of African Research

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1993 Inauguration of the Manu Dibango Youth and Cultural Centre
(Saint-Calais – France)

Officier Des Arts et Lettres (France)

Sacem prize for the LIVE 91 album recorded at the Printemps de bourges Festival (France)

1993 Victoire de la Musique (French music award) for the best instrumental music album
(Negropolitaine album -1992-)

1998 Chevalier de la Confrérie Des Vins de Suresnes (France)

2000 Officier de l'Ordre de la Valeur (Cameroon), national tribute
Featured in the "Who's Who" (2000)

2002 Commandeur Des Arts et Des Lettres within the framework of the 20th edition of the "Fête de la
Musique" (France)

2003 Manu is awarded once again with the "Grand Prix de l'Academie Charles Cros" (France), for his
entire career.

2004 May the 27th, Manu becomes "**UNESCO ARTIST FOR PEACE**".

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