

Complete biography of the musician Tibo Evora

Tibo Evora is a Cape Verdean and French musician and social activist, born in Paris in 1974, son of a father from Burkina Faso and a Cape Verdean mother, from Boa Vista Island. Currently he lives at Cape Verde, where his musical palette unfolds in African, Brazilian and French rhythms, under afro-pop, blues and jazz influence.

Since a very young age cradled by the nostalgic “mornas” and the more cadenced “coladeiras” he inherits a cultural heritage marked by the musical tradition of the “petit pays”, as Cesária Evora used to sing.

At the age of eleven he receives piano lessons and learns how to play the guitar with his uncle Afonso and his mother Virginia, both instilling in his soul the traditional songs from his motherland. One can say that it is through his emigrated family that Tibo makes the acquaintance with the “sodade”, that melancholic feeling which the Portuguese-speaking embody with intensity, caused either by the distance or absence of something or someone, derived from the Portuguese word “saudade” so present in “mornas”, the Cape Verdean people most identifiable musical gender, perhaps even slightly comparable to the Portuguese fado, the Brazilian chorinho and the Argentinean tango.

It is in this serenade environment that Tibo Evora evokes mythical musicians and composers, such as B.Leza, Bana and Morgadinho, source of inspiration of his musical universe. For several years, Tibo performs at the Montmartre cabarets, where he sings and enchants French audiences with “chansons”: Brel, Aznavour, Brassens... a multicultural background which he will later on expand into creating his own style. Almost at the same time he attends Economic Sciences at the Sorbonne.

It is still in his musicians’ family house that Tibo discovers “the barefoot diva”, also known as “morna queen”: Cesária Evora. Tibo delights himself with her songs, up until the day he meets her personally and they become friends. The meetings between the two artists often occur in the bar L’Emboscade (“Chez Silvino”), an iconic place amongst the Cape Verdean community based in Paris.

The arrival of the year 2000 is a pioneering milestone in Tibo Evora’s career, due to his participation in the Festival Ville et Musique du Monde, namely at the Théâtre Gérard Philipe and in the Magic Mirror, emblematic places in the Parisian cultural scene. His music generates an impact that the local press qualifies him as “Minstrel of Cape Verde”. In 2005, he performs at the Africolor Festival, appearing alongside the Cape-Verdean female singer Mayra Andrade. In Moselle he steps on stage to perform during the first part of Bonga’s concert and, still in the same year, performs with his musicians at the time, in the Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens, under the mise-en-scène and art direction of Jean Claude Dreyfus.

In 2006 the performance at the Jazz Festival of Picardie follows, where Tibo is the headliner side by side with Elisabeth Koutanmanou and is accompanied by a big band under the direction of Marc Drouart. The Cape Verdean press qualifies him as “a new star from the French and Cape Verdean musical universe”, according to Teresa Sofia Fortes, from the newspaper “A Semana” – 24.02.2006.

In 2010 Tibo is awarded in Rome with the prize “Amílcar Cabral”, due to his cultural commitment in the spreading of the works of that Guinean and Cape Verdean poet and politician,- similar to a “Che Guevara” from the African Continent – considered the “father” of Cape Verde independence in 1975.

Years before, at the time of his presidency of the neighborhood youth association at the quarter Saint-Denis (Paris), he had managed to persuade the French authorities to inaugurate in 2008 the “Avenue Amílcar Cabral” in that location.

The year of 2012 brings him the personal and up to a certain degree artistic turning point on his career: Tibo leaves for the “dunes island”, Boa Vista, rediscovering his roots, where he makes friends within the local musicians. In that same year he steps for the first time a stage on maternal ground, where he performs in a mega-concert in honor of Cesária Evora.

From there on various stage doors open up to him, namely in 2013 at the Praia da Cruz Festival, in Boa Vista, where the Television of Cape Verde (RTC) consecrates him a program where he sings “pomba mansa”, the song that will become his greatest musical

hit as well as Boa Vista's ex-libris, composed originally by Luis Rendall (1898-1986), a unique figure amongst Cape Verdean composers, as he gave voice to the creole soul in his beautiful "mornas galope" from Boa Vista, which Tibo Evora innovates in his performance as an homage to the women of his island, renaming it of "pombinha" ("little dove"), with a cadenced refrain, being then affectionately nicknamed "pombinha" by the locals.

In December 2014 he lends his voice and his guitar to the short film from the tunisian documentary photographer Selim Harbi and the cape verdean photographer Bob Lima, done within the scope of the Cape Verde Photography Festival (FIVCV 2014), in cooperation with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Ministry of Culture of Cape Verde: "Tchoradinha dum cidad" (the crying of a city) is a melancholic record of the Mindelo inhabitants, whose objective captures slow and subtly his characters, as urban portraits frozen in time and space in a profusion of colors and fragrances and in which, according to Bob Lima's own words, Tibo Evora "makes the guitar weep".

Tibo Evora records his first CD in the year 2015 with Hernani Almeida, considered as one of the big multi-instrumentalists producers of Mindelo, Cape Verde's cultural Mecca and birthplace of Cesária. Hernani Almeida gives a singular dimension to his arrangements, fitting them in a quite innovating universe and allowing for an approach on the Cape Verdean musical tradition in an original and cosmopolitan way. In this album, the mixing is colorful and balanced, in which Tibo – besides his compositions – makes an appeal to great composers: Teófilo Chantre, Jorge Humberto, Palatino, Tiolino e Djim Job, which compose unreleased songs to suit him. Thus, he revisits the celebrated morna "naviu navega" from Vasco Martins, giving it a very personal touch and merging his voice with that of Nana Almeida, a blind musician and former member of Cesária Evora's choir.

Tibo Evora innovates singing for the first time in "ribeira de cadjau" a bold and unprecedented foxtrot, with a creole jazz profile from the thirties, never done in Cape Verde, a musical revolution, this being a typical gender from the african atlantic islands, formerly only played (and not sang) with the guitar.

He composes the ballad "força" in memory of a conversation held with Cesária years before. In the song "karta bençoad", Tibo presents us a musical pearl: a "cola sanjon" that goes back to the early days of colonization at the settlement of the islands made by slaves, and which was once forbidden during colonial times, as it was a dance of strong sensuous nature, where women shook their belly and hips to the beat of the drums, a gender profoundly rooted in his village Cabeça de Tarrafes and celebrated in pilgrimages and folk festivals, (namely at São João), markedly *sui generis* in the history of Cape Verdean music.

Tibo Evora imposes himself in this album with an expressive and virtuous voice, strongly inspired by the return to his "dear island", the poetic muse of his artwork.

Band:

Tibo Evora: vocals // piano // bass // drums // guitar // cavaquinho

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