

IDAN RAICHEL

Biography – December 2016

Brief

Producer, keyboardist, Lyricist, composer and Performer **Idan Raichel** is a global music icon who has brought his inspiring example and soul-stirring music to some of the planet's biggest stages. As the leader of **The Idan Raichel Project**, Idan acts as a musical ambassador representing a hopeful world in which artistic collaboration breaks down barriers between people of different backgrounds and beliefs. Over the past 13 years, Idan has collaborated with American pop stars **India.Arie**, **Dave Matthews** and **Alicia Keys**, not to mention a wide range of artists who are household names in their native countries: Portugal's **Ana Moura**, France's **Patrick Bruel**, Italy's **Ornella Vanoni**, Germany's **Andreas Scholl**, and Mali's **Vieux Farka Touré** to name but a few. The Idan Raichel Project's spectacular live show has enchanted audiences worldwide. They have headlined in some of the world's most prestigious venues, including New York's Central Park Summer Stage, Apollo Theater, Town Hall and Radio City Music Hall, Los Angeles' Kodak Theater, the Sydney Opera House, Zenith in Paris, London's Royal Albert Hall and many international festivals. They have also performed across Europe, South & Central America, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Ethiopia, South Africa, Ghana, Japan and dozens of other countries for enraptured audiences of all backgrounds.

Biography

In 2003, Idan Raichel was catapulted from obscurity to fame when his breakthrough song "Bo'ee," with its entrancing blend of Ethiopian voices and lush global pop, took radio by storm. Almost overnight, **The Idan Raichel Project**, a collaboration of over 95 musicians of diverse cultural backgrounds, became a top-selling band and a symbol of the power of music to bring people together. A string of hit songs followed, and the audiences grew ever larger.

The Idan Raichel Project quickly became a worldwide phenomenon, traveling the globe and bringing their inspiring example and soul-stirring music to some of the planet's biggest stages. Since the release of their first international album on **Cumbancha** in the fall 2006 **The Idan Raichel Project has become a global ambassador representing a hopeful world in which artistic collaboration breaks down barriers between people of different backgrounds and beliefs.**

Idan Raichel, a humble and unassuming musician suddenly found himself one of his country's biggest celebrities. With long dreadlocks tamed by a dramatic black turban, he was instantly recognized wherever he went, inevitably drawing huge crowds of admirers, paparazzi and autograph seekers. A keyboardist, producer and composer, Idan was born in 1977 to a family with Eastern European roots, and although music was an important part of his upbringing, his parents did not place much emphasis on performing music from his particular cultural background. "I think the fact that I didn't have strong family musical roots is what made me be very open to music from all over the world," says Idan. Idan started playing the accordion (which he likes to call "the uncoolest instrument ever") when he was 9 years old, and even at this young age was attracted to the exotic sounds of Gypsy music and tango.

As a teenager, Idan started playing keyboards, and studied jazz in high school, which honed his skills at improvisation and working with other musicians. Idan soon became a successful backup musician and recording session player. After a few years of helping others gain success and notoriety, Idan decided it was time to pursue a project that reflected his musical ideals, and he began working on a demo recording

in a small studio he set up in the basement of his parent's home. He thought it would be a good idea to invite a number of different singers and musicians to participate, in order to better demonstrate his distinct styles and the ways in which he worked with a variety of artists.

Idan sought to celebrate his appreciation and respect for different cultures through his music. Idan invited dozens of his friends and colleagues from diverse backgrounds to participate in his recordings. As the interest in the recording began to grow, demand for live shows increased. Given the number of musicians who participated in the recordings, it would have been impossible to have them all appear on stage, so Idan decided to pick a core group of performers in addition to himself who were both versatile and strong individual artists in their own right.

From the beginning, Idan saw the project as a collaboration between artists who each bring their own musical culture and talents to the stage. "There would be no front man," Idan says. "I would sit at the side and watch things and see what occurs. Every song would have a different singer, we would sit in a half circle and each musician would have a chance to demonstrate what they have to offer." **The live show became symbolic of the album, as it brought together a group of people of different backgrounds but each is equal to the other.**

This sentiment is reflected in the decision to name the collective The Idan Raichel Project. Says Idan, "If I had called the album just 'Idan Raichel,' people would have thought that Raichel is the main voice on all the songs. I wrote the songs and I arranged and produced them, but I perform them together with other vocalists and musicians. On the other hand, we are not a group. It's something in between." To date over 95 different singers aged 16 to 91 years old from dozens of different countries and cultural backgrounds have participated in the Project's recordings or performances.

The Idan Raichel Project has released 4 studio albums and a 3-CD collection of live recordings. In 2006, the US-based record label Cumbancha released a compilation of the group's first two albums worldwide, bringing even more renown to this inspirational collective. **Billboard Magazine called The Idan Raichel Project "One of the most fascinating titles to emerge in world music this year...a multi-ethnic tour de force."** **The New York Times selected the album as one of the top world music releases of the year,** and media from Peru to Portugal was unanimous in their praise. The album also received a nomination as one of the best world music albums of the year by the **BBC Radio 3 Award for World Music.**

In 2009 the Idan Raichel Project released their second international release *Within My Walls*. Much of the album was recorded while Idan was on tour, during recording sessions in hotel rooms, backstage dressing areas, private homes and other impromptu settings. During his extensive travels, Idan met with scores of musicians from diverse backgrounds, and ever the collaborator, he made sure to exchange musical ideas with them. Along the way, he recorded and co-wrote songs with Colombian singer **Marta Gómez**, Cape Verdean luminary **Mayra Andrade** and the silken-voiced **Somi** of Rwandan and Ugandan heritage.

The Project's spectacular live show has enchanted audiences worldwide. They have headlined in some of the world's most prestigious venues, including New York's **Central Park Summer Stage, Apollo Theater, Town Hall and Radio City Music Hall, Los Angeles' Kodak Theater, the Sydney Opera House, Zenith and Bataclan in Paris, London's Royal Albert Hall** and many international festivals. They have also performed across Europe, South & Central America, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Ethiopia, South Africa, Ghana, Japan and dozens of other countries for enraptured audiences of all backgrounds.

A chance meeting with Malian guitarist **Vieux Farka Touré** (the son of the legendary Ali Farka Touré) led to the formation of **The Touré-Raichel Collective** and the recording of the acclaimed album *The Tel Aviv Session*, which was released in March 2012. The result of an inspired afternoon jam session, the resulting album was hailed by the media as **"a masterpiece" (about.com), "simply divine" (Giant Step), "deeply**

affecting” (*The Wall Street Journal*), **“a cross cultural triumph”** (*Time Out Chicago*) and **“the best album this year”** (*Pop Matters*). The album reached the number one spot on the iTunes World Music sales charts and peaked at number 2 on the Billboard World Music Chart. The Touré-Raichel Collective’s US and Canada tour in April 2012 was an unparalleled success with numerous sold-out shows and rave reviews.

Idan has also worked closely with GRAMMY winner **India.Arie**. They performed together at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC in front of **President Obama** and family on the first Martin Luther King, Jr. Day after Obama’s election. Idan and India played their song “Gift of Acceptance” at the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize gala event in Oslo, Norway, and in August 2011 they performed together at the dedication ceremony for the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington DC. India.Arie and Idan toured the US together in 2011.

The Idan Raichel Project’s 2103 album, *Quarter to Six*, featured guest appearances by Portuguese *fado* star **Ana Moura**, Palestinian-Israeli singer **Mira Awad**, German counter-tenor **Andreas Scholl**, Colombia’s **Marta Gómez**, **Vieux Farka Touré** and a selection of up-and-coming singers and musicians. In its review, *The Associated Press* commented, "The idea that one could create a cohesive album by pulling together unique voices singing in different languages and from different musical traditions would seem daunting. Yet this challenge is what keyboardist and composer Idan Raichel has embraced and brought to blossom." Just two months after it was released, *Quarter to Six* reached double-platinum sales status, selling over 120,000 copies to date.

In March, 2013, Idan and the Project were honored with an invitation to perform at a private concert for **President Barack Obama**. In July of that year, world-renowned pop star **Alicia Keys** invited Raichel on stage for a special duet during one of her sold-out arena concerts. One month later, Idan shared the stage with French superstar **Patrick Bruel**.

Idan's collaboration with Alicia Keys deepened in September, 2014, when she invited him and Palestinian singer and *qanun* player **Ali Amr** to join her on stage at the Global Citizen Festival in New York's Central Park. The event featured **Jay Z**, **Beyoncé**, **Sting**, **No Doubt** and **Carrie Underwood**, and appearances by numerous global dignitaries and world leaders. For an audience of 60,000, Keys, Raichel and Amr performed “We Are Here,” a new song Keys wrote to unite her audience in a global effort for peace, and to encourage young people to play an active role in making the world a better place. The performance was broadcast to a national audience on NBC that evening.

Alicia Keys praised Idan in a video she created to commemorate his selection for the **2014 MTV Role Model Award**. "This is an amazing, amazing award," Keys said in the video, "which is what you are. But really what you are is just an incredible human being who bridges cultures and promotes tolerance, which there's nothing more important than you and your mission and your work. So congratulations because you inspire me all the time."

On September 30, 2014, The Touré-Raichel Collective released their second album, *The Paris Session*. While *The Paris Session* was the result of the same freeform approach that was used in the first album, this time around they decided to feature more songs with vocals, a wider range of instrumentation, and appearances by musician friends such as Senegalese artist **Daby Touré** on bass, Israeli trumpeter **Niv Toar**, Malian singer **Seckouba Diabate** and others. Touré and Raichel had honed their interplay over the course of multiple tours together, but the album possessed the same spontaneous, heartfelt magic as its predecessor. The Touré-Raichel Collective toured the US in November 2014, followed by a performance at the New Morning in Paris, France.

On January 12th, 2015 Raichel joined French superstar **Patrick Bruel** and Moroccan singer **Youness El Guezouli** on stage at L'Opéra in Paris to sing "Pourquoi ne pas y croire ..." (Why Not Believe) in French,

Arabic and Hebrew. The symbolic significance of the performance was augmented by the Charlie Hebdo attacks that had taken place in Paris less than a week earlier.

In 2015, Raichel performed and collaborated with an impressive lineup of international stars, including Italy's **Ornella Vanoni**, Cuban singer **Danay Suarez** and Portuguese singer **Antonio Zambujo** among others. Raichel continued to tour across the globe, including a December 2015 tour with The Idan Raichel Project in Japan, a series of concerts in Germany with Andreas Scholl and an appearance at the prestigious Jazz a la Villette festival in Paris with the Touré-Raichel Collective in September 2015.

In December 2015 Raichel took part in a United Nations project entitled "United Pianos" in which 11 renowned pianists from across the globe collaborated remotely to perform Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf." The project resulted in a video whose goal is "to promote tolerance and unity through music."

Raichel's latest album, *Ha'Yad Ha'Chama*, entitled *At the Edge of the Beginning* internationally, was released worldwide on January 22, 2016. The album, Raichel's first ever solo album, represented a turn inward for the global music star; an opportunity to take stock of the past, ponder love, life and family and imagine what will truly be important to him in years to come. Now the father of two baby daughters, Raichel has begun focusing on his personal life. He even shaved off his trademark dreadlocks, an act that thwarted expectations and symbolized his desire for a fresh start. His now bald head embodies the clean slate Raichel has been seeking in this new cycle of his life.

The title of his 2016 album, *At the Edge of the Beginning*, sums up this sentiment succinctly. It's an introspective work, consisting of mostly gentle songs with unassuming melodies and arrangements. "This album has been a way for me to find myself, to come to terms with the fact that I am now part of a close family," notes Raichel. "I'm not here for just myself anymore; I'm here for my daughters."

While *At the Edge of the Beginning* does not mean Raichel has put an end to The Idan Raichel Project, he looks forward to opportunities to strip down to the essence of musical expression. "I hope this album will enable me to go on stage, me and a piano, and to tell the audience stories, inspirational thoughts, and just sing songs. I think that this is the ultimate way to be an artist, when you're forced to depend on yourself and on your soul."

Following the release of the album in early 2016, Raichel started touring his new solo piano concerts titled "Idan Raichel - Piano - Songs". He continued to tour with the Idan Raichel Project and with the "Idan Raichel- Piano Concert with Friends" throughout Europe and the US. In February 2016, Raichel performed at the famous Konzerthaus in Vienna with special guests **Marta Gómez**, **Vieux Farka Touré** and **MoZuluArt**. The concert was sold out.

On May 8th, 2016, Raichel was honored with the 2016 "Unsung Hero Award" from the Drum Major Institute. Martin Luther King III, son of Dr. King, the late civil rights icon, granted the award. It was the first time the organization had granted the award outside the United States and to a non-U.S. citizen.

Raichel continued to tour throughout 2016, performing in the US, Europe and South America. As part of the tour in South America, Idan and members of the Idan Raichel Project performed with the **Ensemble 21** orchestra of Buenos Aires, playing special orchestral arrangements of his songs.

On October 2016, an Italian version of Raichel's song "Ma'agalim" was released by the great Italian music icons **Mina & Celentano** as their first single in 20 years. The song, "Amami Amami", received positive reviews from both audience and media and soon after became number 1 on Italian iTunes. Later that year another special version to a Raichel melody, this time to the song "Sabe Deus", was released by the Iranian singer **Golazin** in her native language Farsi.

At the end of 2016, **JPMorgan Chase & Co** one of the world's largest financial institutions, included Raichel's album *At the Edge of the Beginning* in their #NextList2017, a selection of recommended books, experiences, and music for their clients for the upcoming year.

Raichel's plans for 2017 include extensive solo piano tours across Europe and the US. Raichel continues to write new material and plans to release new recordings and collaborations in the year to come.

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