

## **Idir, the Pioneer of Amazigh Music**

### **Biography**

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Idir was born in 1949 at Ait Lahcene a Berber village in Haute-Kabylia. IDIR's real name is Hamid Cheriet. This farmer's son started studying Geology and was destined for a career in the petroleum industry before his rise to stardom. Idir has been the ambassador of the Kabyle culture, especially the Kabyle music, with only his vocals and acoustic guitar. Idir has always used his status to claim his Berber (Amazigh) identity. His first album "A Vava inouva" came out in 1976, and the song "A Vava inouva" was translated into seven languages. After notable success, Idir wrote and recorded his second album "Ay Arrac Negh" (to our children) in 1979.

Idir restarted his career again with the release of a compilation in 1991 of seventeen songs from his first two albums "A Vava inouva" and "Ay Arrac Negh".

In 1993, a new album "les Chasseurs de lumières" (the hunters of lights) appeared on the Blue Silver label. "Les Chasseurs de lumières" is about (his) predilection, love, freedom and exile (which he had known since he moved to the Paris region in 1975). The acoustic guitar gives to the songs of this album a touch of modernism. We can also hear the voice of the Breton singer Alan Stivell in the duo "Isaltiyen". Idir performed his songs for the public at the Olympia in Paris on June 26th, 27th and 28th, 1993.

### **Questions of Identity**

A man of conviction, Idir often participated in concerts supporting different causes. On June 22nd 1995 more than 6.000 people came to applaud the singer and his friend Khaled, initiators of the association "l'Algérie la vie" which invited them to a concert for peace freedom and tolerance. It was a triumph for the two artists who on this occasion joined the Kabyle and Arabic-speaking communities together. Idir also took part in the concert in memory of Matoub Lounes, the Kabyle singer who was assassinated in 1998.

Idir's record making comeback was made with "Identities" in 1999, a tribute album which joined numerous artists together from Manu Chao to Dan Ar Braz without forgetting Maxime Le Forestier or Scotswoman Karen Matheson for a "A vava inouva 2", but also Gnawa Diffusion, Zebda, Gilles Servat, Geoffrey Oryema and l'ONB. Idir gathered here those who advocate cultural openings as well as recognition of each person's own roots.

When Idir performed two concerts at the legendary Olympia music hall in Paris in December '99 he was joined by an equally impressive amount of guest stars. In fact, the celebrity line-up included everyone from Frédéric Galliano to guitarist Thierry Robin and the ONB.

Idir took to the stage to defend his national identity once again at the "ème Printemps berbère", a celebration of Berber culture organised at Le Zènth in Paris in the spring of 2001. The Algerian star returned to the same venue on July 8th, organising a special fund-raising concert to support the population in Kabylia when anti-government riots rocked the cradle of Berber culture in the summer of 2001. Idir was joined on stage by an impressive list of guest stars and thousands of French fans turned out to Le Zènth to show their support.

In May 2002, his record company released a compilation featuring many of the artist's songs. Entitled "Deux rives, un rêve" it also provided the fans with the opportunity to listen to two previously unreleased tracks. One of them written by Jean-Jacques Goldman, evoked the terrible downpour that overwhelmed Algiers with water in November 2001.

On September 20th, Idir began a new tour by bringing the house down at the Zenith in Paris. The tour was to last until December.

*Wikipedia & rfimusique*