

Mp3 Malika Zarra - On The Ebony Road



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A subtle, groovy and unusual mix between jazz and popular moroccan music. 8 MP3 Songs JAZZ: World Fusion, WORLD: African Details: Moroccan-French world jazz singer/composer/producer, MALIKA ZARRA is a multi-cultural shape-shifter, an enchantress who leaps effortlessly between seemingly unconnected languages and traditions, uniting them while utilizing each to further enrich the others. The exotically beautiful artist with the velvety, sinuous mezzo-soprano voice has demonstrated a rare ability to communicate both powerful and subtle ideas and feelings in French, English and Moroccan Arabic and is now a much-in-demand headliner at nightclubs and festivals the world over. Malika was born in Southern Morocco, in a little village called Ouled Teima. Her father's family was originally from M'Hamid, an oasis just off the Sahara, while her mother was a Berber from the High Atlas. During her early childhood, there was always music and dancing in the house and Malika sang almost from babyhood. After her family emigrated to a suburb of Paris, she found herself straddling two very different societies. I had to be French at school yet retain my Moroccan cultural heritage at home, she recalls, Like many immigrant children, I learned to switch quickly between the two. It was hard but brought me a lot of good things too. Malika's interest in music led her to take up the clarinet in grade school. Meanwhile, she was being exposed to a wide variety of musical styles, she cites fellow Moroccan Chiha Hamdaouia, the Lebanese-born, Egyptian-based ud virtuoso/composer Farid el Atrache, and Algerian-French singer Warda (Al-Jazairia) as major influences. She also absorbed albums by Ella Fitzgerald, Bobby McFerrin, Thelonious Monk, Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin. When I decided to learn singing, I started with jazz because I was attracted by the improvisation, which is also important in Arabic music, she says. Although her family was not in favor of her pursuing a musical career, Malika nonetheless attended classes at conservatories and jazz academies at Tours and Marseille and studied privately with Sarah Lazarus and

Françoise Galais. During her apprentice phase, during which she became in fixture in France and on the Paris scene, Malika performed at a variety of well-known clubs and events, including Festival Lesprit Jazz de St Germain, Sunside, Baiser Sal, Hot Brass, Espace Julien, Pelle Mle, Festival interculturel d'Avignon, and Cit de la Musique in Marseille. In the beginning, she interpreted classic material strictly in the original languages -- then a breakthrough occurred. When I started to sing in Arabic, writing new lyrics for jazz standards, I found that people reacted really strongly. There is always more emotion when you sing in your own language because your feelings are more intense. As a composer, the process was similar ; asked why and when she began writing her own songs, she says impishly, After getting tired of forgetting English lyrics ! An early visit to New York made a strong impression on her, I came the first time in 1996. It was an amazing experience. I felt that I could be more myself and learn a lot of things, musically and as a human being. In 2004, Malika decided to relocate to New York City. Having crafted a repertoire that incorporated her native Berber, Gnawa (a percussive form of religious trance music) and Shabi (Arabic working class blues) heritages, the intellectual elegance of French pop, plus freewheeling jazz rhythms and techniques, her reputation as a solo act began to grow. Malika's vocal versatility led to invitations to participate in a wide variety of projects, including house, dance, gospel, funk and African music, and kept her busy as a session and back-up singer. Malika eventually recorded and/or sat in with Tommy Campbell, Makoto Ozone, Lonnie Plaxico, Brahim Fribgane, Michael Cain, Jason Lindner, Omer Avital, James Hurt, Jacques Schwarz-Bart, Francis MBappe, Miles Griffith, Harvey S, Kenny Davis, Jerome Harris, Gino Sitson, Francis Jacob, Mamadou Ba, Harvey Wirht, Manu Koch, Gretchen Parlato, and Michel Perez. Among the venues she has graced are the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival and French Embassy in Washington DC, and SOBs, the Jazz Festival at Untermyer Park, Europa Club, Enzos Jazz Club, Riverbank State Park, Zinc Bar Jazz Club, Knitting Factory, St. Nicks Pub, Louis 649, Rockwood, Tagine, Azaza Lounge, and Casbah Rouge. She has also forged a fruitful partnership with noted Cameroonian vocalist/composer Gino Sitson ; After I went to listen to him in concert, we met and talked. Then he came to one of my shows and told me about his a cappella project, Vocal Deliria -- I loved the idea and now sing with him. 2005 turned out to be a banner year, in which she appeared on two albums, Jihad Muhammads The Other Side and Richard Khuzamis Fused. Malika's debut solo album "On the Ebony Road" (2006), reveals a firm grasp of a richly diverse bouquet of references, fusing Orient and Occident, East and West, into a lively, sensual, fresh, and deeply poem of inclusion. Working with some

of the finest international jazz players now active, she is in her element as bandleader and collaborator, at once creating a new vocabulary and intuitively going with the flow. She is well aware that in the USA, there is still another set of realities, every bit as complex as those she experienced in France, and that its not always easy to get past fear and prejudice. However, she remains upbeat and confident of her ability to reach out with her voice and heart. We all need to get just a little bit interested in other cultures.

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