

coco mbASSI sepia



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Coco Mbassis' (pronounced em-bas-see) debut solo album is filled with her suave, refined, and multi-nuanced voice. With a unique vocal tone, highlighted by her nostalgic and nonetheless stirring music, **"Sepia"** takes the listener on a special trip, a prayer for the world.

"Coco Mbassi distills fairytales into precious jewels" - VIBRATIONS
"The first album by this singer and her musicians is a delicacy" - BASS MAGAZINE

*Nominated for the BBC Radio 3 Awards for World, "Newcomer" Category

tracklisting

- one **mbaki** [intro] 1:23
- two **iwiye** 2:53
- three **mundene** 3:28
- four **d** 4:17
- five **muka mwam** 3:39
- six **muto** 5:30
- seven **profunda sensação** 4:09
- eight **A SAWO** 5:04
- nine **mbombo** 4:37
- ten **bayedi** 3:12
- eleven **oa nde** 3:50
- twelve **bila** 2:07
- thirteen **stabat** 3:57
- fourteen **mbaki** [outro] 2:33

album info

artist **coco mbASSI**
title **sepia**
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4380 Redwood Hwy. Suite B10 | San Rafael, CA 94903
toll free: (888) 848-6777 | phone: (415) 491-0733 | fax: (415) 491-0716
email: info@tinderrecords.com | web: www.tinderrecords.com

Media Contact:
Laura L. Grivainis | laura@tinderrecords.com



coco mbassi biography

Coco comes from Cameroon and is now living in Paris. The path that led her there is a new and different one, bringing her to a relatively unexplored plain - a plain grounded in the African musical tradition in which she was raised, but nevertheless securely rooted in the European music scene with elements of jazz, classical and blues. As a result, the stylistic differences are broken down, and happily evade any attempts to categorize by strict definitions of genre.

And this is how it all began: in Africa during the 70's, children and youths performed and sang a cappella versions of current hits on a small stage in front of the screen before the main feature in the cinema. At the age of seven Coco Mbassi took part in such a competition for the first time in Cameroon's capital, Jaunde, and won the first prize. It was at that stage that she knew that she would be a singer some day.

In 1983 Coco moved with her older sister, who had just turned eighteen, to Paris. Their parents stayed in Cameroon while the two sisters completed high school, and went on to university. In the beginning it was hard going: Coco had to come to terms with the new environment which also involved dealing with the widespread racism that one encounters even in a multi-cultural city like Paris. At first she was fascinated by the European culture and wanted to assimilate as much of it as she could, in order to integrate better. She listened mostly to European pop-music up to the point where she discovered herself again: although she was African herself, she took up African dancing classes and took in everything she could that was connected to the African culture.

In the beginning of the nineties she began to work in Paris as a background singer. She has sung in the French-African gospel choir "The Cherubs" and has worked with French and international stars like Salif Keita, Touré Kunda, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Manu Dibango, both in the studio and on stage. Coco can also be heard on the 1999 CD release of Cameroon's grande-dame of Bikutsi, Anne Marie Nzie. Coco's breakthrough came in 1996, when she was awarded the "Prix Découverte" by Radio France International for the song "Muengue mwa Ndolo". This song was the first complete song she had recorded! With help in the form of sponsorship from the RFI she performed at internationally important festivals like the Afrika Festival Würzburg, Festival d'été du Quebec and others. In the course of these years she also gave birth to two sons. Combining this surprising success with a family life often proved to be difficult, and as a result, a few more years were required until Coco Mbassi could complete her first solo record, "Sepia".

The words to the songs are written in her mother tongue, Duala. These words are often found combined with jazzy, minimalist and classical arrangements, where vocal polyphony and African rhythm continue to play an important role. Coco Mbassi composes her own pieces and writes the words. Although her husband - who is a classical double-bass teacher - exercises a strong influence on her writing, in her childhood she was exposed to a wide variety of music in the home, from Händel, Makossa and big band jazz.

The central theme of her songs are everyday aspects of human existence like love, friendship, and family life, coupled with a profound Christian religiosity which Coco celebrates frequently with an abundance of music and songs at masses in the free Christian community in Paris. Coco's songs tell stories that are often based on personal life experience. It's these stories and feelings that make her songs what they are today, memories made up of those old sepia-colored (black & white) photographs from home...