

Kabumbayi Joh



Music is more than sound. You don't need to understand it, just feel it.

Fabrice Kabumbayi

Known professionally as Kabumbayi Joh, is a Congolese singer, songwriter, arranger, producer and multi-instrumentalist. His music is a fusion of jazz and soukous music, originally from the Congo.

At the age of 8, Joh started singing in the church choir, but he couldn't imagine taking up music as a profession until he won a music competition at his elementary school. Winning this competition encouraged him to start a career in music and record his first album “Nos âmes”.

*Music is more than sound.
You don't need to
understand it, just feel it.
It's the voice of the heart
speaking through emotion.”*

Musical Inspiration

Kabumbayi Joh draws deep inspiration from the everyday experiences of life, weaving stories of love, struggle, hope, and resilience into his music. Singing in French, English, Swahili, and Lingala, he creates a bridge across cultures and communities, delivering messages that resonate far beyond borders.

His 2020 album “**Le Monde**” featured one of Rwanda's greatest artists, **Mami Martin**, marking a significant milestone in his career. In September 2022, Kabumbayi Joh released “**Sous le Soleil**”, an emotional and deeply personal album dedicated to his late father, who tragically passed away in September 2021.

“My father's death was the most painful situation and story that I've ever experienced,” says Kabumbayi Joh. The album channels the grief and emotional turmoil following his father's tragic death killed by his own brother in a heartbreaking family conflict over inheritance transforming personal pain into powerful musical expression.

This album provided the crucial encouragement to pursue music professionally. This breakthrough led him to a milestone that captured the raw emotion and unique blend of influences that come to define his sound and his musical identity.

Musical Style and Artistic Vision

Kabumbayi Joh's work is a vibrant fusion of jazz, soukous, a sophisticated blend that speaks to both his technical music skills and his deep cultural roots. As a singer, songwriter, arranger, producer, and multi-instrumentalist, his artistry is marked by his voice and the unique style of his music. His music often explores themes of everyday life, love, and reconciliation, resonating with audiences across diverse backgrounds.

How It All Began

Kabumbayi Joh's musical journey began in the aftermath of the 2002 volcanic eruption in Goma, a time when the city was left without electricity or running water. Life was difficult, and every morning before school, he had to fetch water for his family. It was during those early morning walks that fate introduced him to two talented brothers, **Ushindi** and **Gery**, who were selling 20-liter containers of water while playing guitar and singing beautiful melodies. Their music was so captivating that young Kabumbayi often forgot his task, simply standing and watching in awe.

One day, driven by curiosity and passion, he approached **Ushindi** and asked, "How can I play guitar and sing like you?" Ushindi smiled and said, "It's easy you just need to feel the melody." Recognizing the fire in Kabumbayi's eyes, Ushindi began offering him 30 minutes of guitar lessons each day when he came to fetch water. That simple act of kindness opened the door to Kabumbayi Joh's first steps into music.

As he developed his skills, Kabumbayi became known in his neighborhood for playing guitar. The church where his family prayed had musical instruments but no one to play them, so he stepped in, using his growing talent to serve the community and grow as a musician.

In 2014, a turning point came when his friend Alain was selected for a regional music competition organized by the **Amani Festival**. Alain went on to win and earned the chance to perform alongside one of Congo's greatest artists, **Pascal Lokua Kanza**, during the festival's first edition. Watching his friend share the stage with such a legendary figure opened up the interest to learn more about diversity of music cultures around the world.

