

## African musicians - Youssou N'Dour

Youssou N'Dour is a famous musician from Senegal. He comes from the city of Dakar. He is a very popular singer and also writes the songs and the music. He is famous in other countries as well as Senegal. He's an international pop star.

Youssou comes from Dakar - his mother and father are from Senegal. He was born on October 1st, 1959. He speaks Wolof, the language of Senegal.

Youssou is a singer and a musician and a songwriter. He can write songs and music, sing the songs and play the musical instruments, and make CDs of popular music.

He has a special style of dance music and it is very popular in many countries. He gives his music a special name in Wolof. He calls it 'mbalax'. This kind of music comes from the Wolof style of music called 'sabar'.

Mbalax uses music from jazz, blues, French music and Latin music – all together with Wolof drum rhythms from sabar. His music mixes many styles - hip-hop music, Cuban music, and Latin American rhythms as well. It is very popular in all Africa - people love to dance when Youssou plays his music. Mbalax dancing is very popular in nightclubs and at parties.

He has played with many music groups, like the Star Band. He formed his own group, Etoile de Dakar, in 1979, and later another group Super Etoile de Dakar.

Youssou likes to work with other musicians. He worked with Peter Gabriel, Sting, Bruce Springsteen and Paul Simon and made CDs with them.

He is also a good businessman. He has his own studio to make music. And his own company to sell music. He can control his music business himself.

He is one of the richest musicians in Africa. People say he has more than \$100 million. He owns radio and TV stations, and owns many houses. He owns a newspaper, L'Observateur, one of the biggest in Senegal.

Youssou n'Dour is also an actor, and was in many films like 'Return to Goree' and 'Amazing Grace'. There is a famous film about him, called 'Youssou N'Dour: I Bring What I Love'.

He is also a politician. He was the minister of tourism in Senegal, from 2012 to 2013. He is famous for his political work - not only for music.

In 2000 he was an ambassador for the United Nations. He made a concert to free Nelson Mandela. He worked with UNICEF to help poor people. He worked with international groups for human rights – like the United Nations and Amnesty International. He started Project Joko to help Africans get online – they opened internet cafes in Senegal and other places. He started a finance project called Birima to help people borrow money for their work.

He has won many prizes for his work. In 2005 he got a Grammy for his music.

In 2011 he got an honour from Yale University in the USA for his political work.

In 2013 he got a prize from the government of Sweden for helping people understand each other.

Youssou N'Dour is a famous musician who also wants to help people.

### New words for this article

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| musician   | a person who makes music                                   |
| politician | a person who works in politics                             |
| rhythm     | the strong sound of music; it comes from the drums         |
| minister   | a senior politician, a person in the government            |
| ambassador | a person who speaks for his/her country in another country |
| honour     | a prize for your work                                      |

### Comprehension Questions

- 1 What is the title of one of Youssou's films?
- 2 What is the name of Youssou's style of music?
- 3 What was Youssou's job in government?
- 4 Which prize did he get for his music?
- 5 Which university gave him an honour?

- 1 Return to Goree or Amazing Grace
- 2 The style is Mbalax
- 3 He was the minister of tourism in Senegal
- 4 He won a Grammy for his music
- 5 Yale University in the USA gave him an honour

### Comprehension questions

### Answers